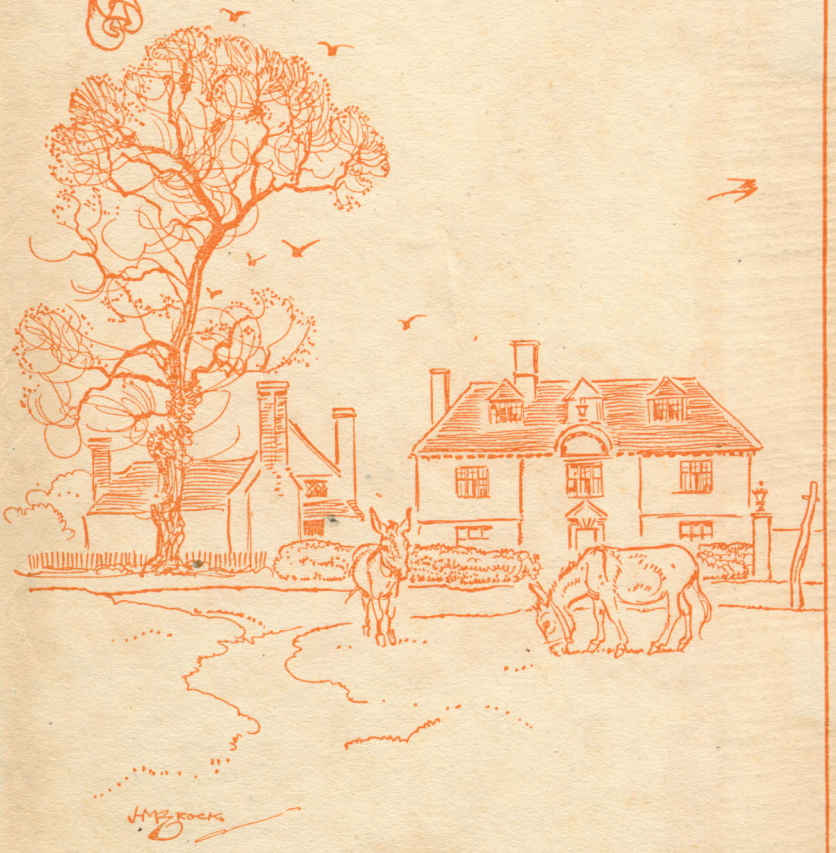
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and Other Tales
By J.H.Ewing



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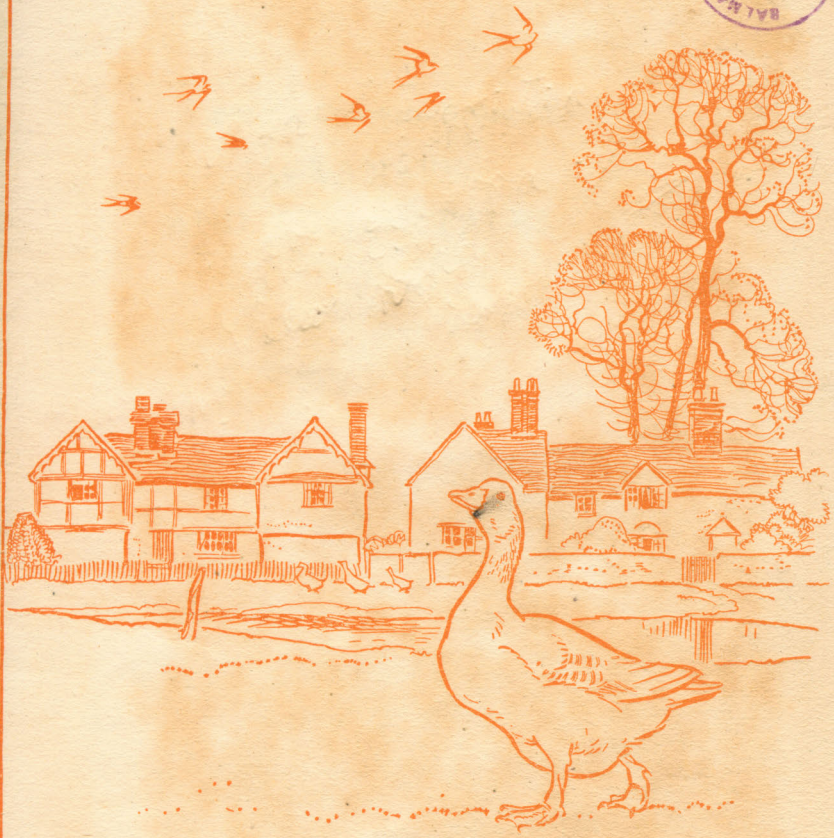


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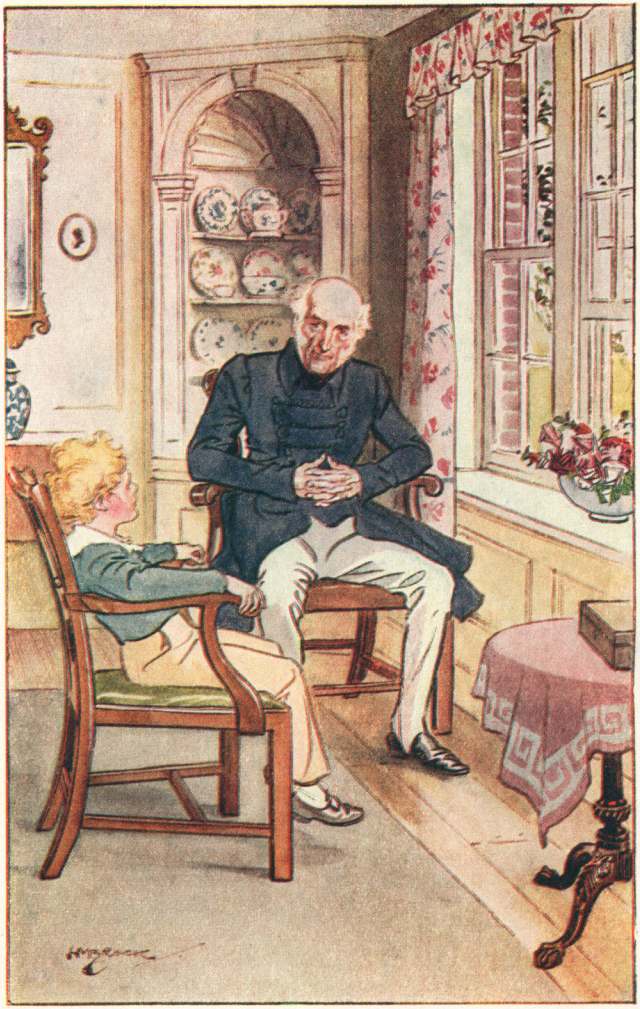
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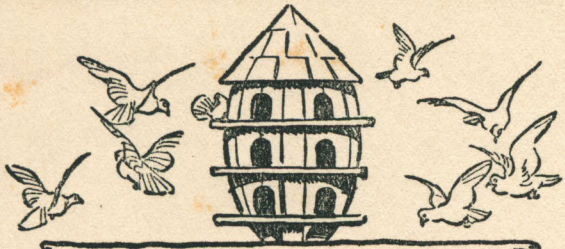
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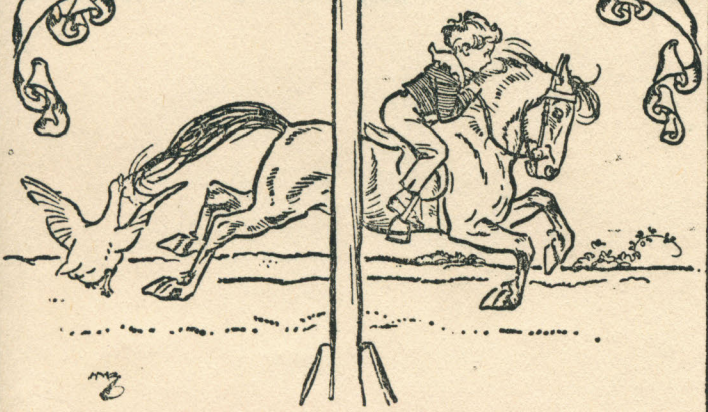
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JACKANAPES and Other Tales

By J. H. Ewing

Illustrated by H. M. Brock



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JACKANAPES

"If I might buffet for my love, or bound my horse for her favours, I could lay on like a butcher, and sit like a Jackanapes never off!"

King Henry V., Act V. Scene ii.

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CHAPTER I

" Last noon beheld them full of lusty life,
Last eve in Beauty's circle proudly gay,
The midnight brought the signal-sound of strife,
The morn the marshalling in arms,—the day
Battle's magnificently-stern array !
The thunder-clouds close o'er it, which when rent
The earth is cover'd thick with other clay,
Which her own clay shall cover, heap'd and pent,
Rider and horse,—friend, foe,—in one red burial blent!

Their praise is hymn'd by loftier harps than mine;
Yet one I would select from that proud throng,

* * * * *

—— to thee, to thousands, of whom each
And one as all a ghastly gap did make
In his own kind and kindred, whom to teach
Forgetfulness were mercy for their sake;
The Archangel's trump, not Glory's, must awake
Those whom they thirst for; "—BYRON.

Two Donkeys and the Geese lived on the Green, and all other residents of any social standing lived in houses round it. The houses had no names. Everybody's address was, " The Green," but the Postman and the people of the place knew where each family lived. As to the rest of the world, what has one to do with the rest of the world, when he is safe at home on his own Goose Green? Moreover, if a stranger did come on any lawful business, he might ask his way at the shop.

Most of the inhabitants were long-lived, early deaths (like that of the little Miss Jessamine) being exceptional; and most of the old people were proud of

their age, especially the sexton, who would be ninety-nine come Martinmas, and whose father remembered a man who had carried arrows, as a boy, for the battle of Flodden Field. The Grey Goose and the big Miss Jessamine were the only elderly persons who kept their ages secret. Indeed, Miss Jessamine never mentioned any one's age, or recalled the exact year in which anything had happened. She said that she had been taught that it was bad manners to do so "in a mixed assembly."

The Grey Goose also avoided dates, but this was partly because her brain, though intelligent, was not mathematical, and computation was beyond her. She never got farther than "last Michaelmas," "the Michaelmas before that," and "the Michaelmas before the Michaelmas before that." After this her head, which was small, became confused, and she said, "Ga, ga!" and changed the subject.

But she remembered the little Miss Jessamine, the Miss Jessamine with the "conspicuous" hair. Her aunt, the big Miss Jessamine, said it was her only fault. The hair was clean, was abundant, was glossy, but do what you would with it it never looked quite like other people's. And at church, after Saturday night's wash, it shone like the best brass fender after a Spring cleaning. In short, it was conspicuous, which does not become a young woman—especially in church.

Those were worrying times altogether, and the Green was used for strange purposes. A political meeting was held on it with the village Cobbler in the chair, and a speaker who came by stage coach from the town, where they had wrecked the bakers' shops, and discussed the price of bread. He came a second time, by stage, but the people had heard something about him in the meanwhile, and they did not keep

him on the Green. They took him to the pond and tried to make him swim, which he could not do, and the whole affair was very disturbing to all quiet and peaceable fowls. After which another man came, and preached sermons on the Green, and a great many people went to hear him; for those were "trying times," and folk ran hither and thither for comfort. And then what did they do but drill the ploughboys on the Green, to get them ready to fight the French, and teach them the goose-step! However, that came to an end at last, for Bony was sent to St. Helena, and the ploughboys were sent back to the plough.

Everybody lived in fear of Bony in those days, especially the naughty children, who were kept in order during the day by threats of, "Bony shall have you," and who had nightmares about him in the dark. They thought he was an Ogre in a cocked hat. The Grey Goose thought he was a Fox, and that all the men of England were going out in red coats to hunt him. It was no use to argue the point, for she had a very small head, and when one idea got into it there was no room for another.

Besides, the Grey Goose never saw Bony, nor did the children, which rather spoilt the terror of him, so that the Black Captain became more effective as a Bogy with hardened offenders. The Grey Goose remembered *his* coming to the place perfectly. What he came for she did not pretend to know. It was all part and parcel of the war and bad times. He was called the Black Captain, partly because of himself, and partly because of his wonderful black mare. Strange stories were afloat of how far and how fast that mare could go, when her master's hand was on her mane and he whispered in her ear. Indeed, some people thought we might reckon ourselves very lucky

if we were not out of the frying-pan into the fire, and had not got a certain well-known Gentleman of the Road to protect us against the French. But that, of course, made him none the less useful to the Johnsons' Nurse, when the little Miss Johnsons were naughty.

"You leave off crying this minnit, Miss Jane, or I'll give you right away to that horrid wicked officer. Jemima! just look out o' the windy, if you please, and see if the Black Cap'n's a-coming with his horse to carry away Miss Jane."

And there, sure enough, the Black Captain strode by, with his sword clattering as if it did not know whose head to cut off first. But he did not call for Miss Jane that time. He went on to the Green, where he came so suddenly upon the eldest Master Johnson, sitting in a puddle on purpose, in his new nankeen skeleton suit, that the young gentleman thought judgment had overtaken him at last, and abandoned himself to the howlings of despair. His howls were redoubled when he was clutched from behind and swung over the Black Captain's shoulder, but in five minutes his tears were stanched, and he was playing with the officer's accoutrements. All of which the Grey Goose saw with her own eyes, and heard afterwards that that bad boy had been whining to go back to the Black Captain ever since, which showed how hardened he was, and that nobody but Bonaparte himself could be expected to do him any good.

But those were "trying times." It was bad enough when the pickle of a large and respectable family cried for the Black Captain; when it came to the little Miss Jessamine crying for him, one felt that the sooner the French landed and had done with it the better.

The big Miss Jessamine's objection to him was

that he was a soldier, and this prejudice was shared by all the Green. "A soldier," as the speaker from the town had observed, "is a bloodthirsty, unsettled sort of a rascal; that the peaceable, home-loving, bread-winning citizen can never conscientiously look on as a brother, till he has beaten his sword into a ploughshare, and his spear into a pruning-hook."

On the other hand there was some truth in what the Postman (an old soldier) said in reply; that the sword has to cut a way for us out of many a scrape into which our bread-winners get us when they drive their ploughshares into fallows that don't belong to them. Indeed, whilst our most peaceful citizens were prosperous chiefly by means of cotton, of sugar, and of the rise and fall of the money-market (not to speak of such saleable matters as opium, firearms, and "black ivory"), disturbances were apt to arise in India, Africa, and other outlandish parts, where the fathers of our domestic race were making fortunes for their families. And, for that matter, even on the Green, we did not wish the military to leave us in the lurch, so long as there was any fear that the French were coming.[1]

To let the Black Captain have little Miss Jessamine, however, was another matter. Her aunt would not hear of it; and then, to crown all, it appeared that the Captain's father did not think the

[1] "The political men declare war, and generally for commercial interests; but when the nation is thus embroiled with its neighbours the soldier draws the sword, at the command of his country. . . . One word as to thy comparison of military and commercial persons. What manner of men be they who have supplied the Caffres with the firearms and ammunition to maintain their savage and deplorable wars? Assuredly they are not military. . . . Cease then, if thou would'st be counted among the just, to vilify soldiers."—W. NAPIER, Lieut.-General, *November* 1851.

young lady good enough for his son. Never was any affair more clearly brought to a conclusion.

But those were "trying times"; and one moonlight night, when the Grey Goose was sound asleep upon one leg, the Green was rudely shaken under her by the thud of a horse's feet. "Ga, ga!" said she, putting down the other leg, and running away.

By the time she returned to her place not a thing was to be seen or heard. The horse had passed like a shot. But next day, there was hurrying and skurrying and cackling at a very early hour, all about the white house with the black beams, where Miss Jessamine lived. And when the sun was so low, and the shadows so long on the grass that the Grey Goose felt ready to run away at the sight of her own neck, little Miss Jane Johnson, and her "particular friend" Clarinda, sat under the big oak tree on the Green, and Jane pinched Clarinda's little finger till she found that she could keep a secret, and then she told her in confidence that she had heard from Nurse and Jemima that Miss Jessamine's niece had been a very naughty girl, and that that horrid wicked officer had come for her on his black horse, and carried her right away.

"Will she never come back?" asked Clarinda.

"Oh, no!" said Jane decidedly. "Bony never brings people back."

"Not never no more?" sobbed Clarinda, for she was weak-minded, and could not bear to think that Bony never never let naughty people go home again.

Next day Jane had heard more.

"He has taken her to a Green."

"A Goose Green?" asked Clarinda.

"No. A Gretna Green. Don't ask so many

questions, child," said Jane; who, having no more to tell, gave herself airs.

Jane was wrong on one point. Miss Jessamine's niece did come back, and she and her husband were forgiven. The Grey Goose remembered it well, it was Michaelmastide, the Michaelmas before the Michaelmas before the Michaelmas—but, ga, ga! What does the date matter? It was autumn, harvest-time, and everybody was so busy prophesying and praying about the crops, that the young couple wandered through the lanes, and got blackberries for Miss Jessamine's celebrated crab and blackberry jam, and made guys of themselves with bryony-wreaths, and not a soul troubled his head about them, except the children, and the Postman. The children dogged the Black Captain's footsteps (his bubble reputation as an Ogre having burst), clamouring for a ride on the black mare. And the Postman would go somewhat out of his postal way to catch the Captain's dark eye, and show that he had not forgotten how to salute an officer.

But they were "trying times." One afternoon the black mare was stepping gently up and down the grass, with her head at her master's shoulder, and as many children crowded on to her silky back as if she had been an elephant in a menagerie; and the next afternoon she carried him away, sword and *sabretache* clattering war-music at her side, and the old Postman waiting for them, rigid with salutation, at the four cross roads.

War and bad times! It was a hard winter, and the big Miss Jessamine and the little Miss Jessamine (but she was Mrs. Black-Captain now) lived very economically that they might help their poorer neighbours. They neither entertained nor went into company, but the young lady always went up the

village as far as the *George and Dragon* for air and exercise, when the London Mail [1] came in.

One day (it was a day in the following June) it came in earlier than usual, and the young lady was not there to meet it.

But a crowd soon gathered round the *George and Dragon*, gaping to see the Mail Coach dressed with flowers and oak-leaves, and the guard wearing a laurel-wreath over and above his royal livery. The ribbons that decked the horses were stained and flecked with the warmth and foam of the pace at which they had come, for they had pressed on with the news of Victory.

Miss Jessamine was sitting with her niece under the oak tree on the Green, when the Postman put a newspaper silently into her hand. Her niece turned quickly—

"Is there news?"

"Don't agitate yourself, my dear," said her aunt. "I will read it aloud, and then we can enjoy it together; a far more comfortable method, my love, than when you go up the village, and come home out of breath, having snatched half the news as you run."

"I am all attention, dear aunt," said the little lady, clasping her hands tightly on her lap.

Then Miss Jessamine read aloud—she was proud of her reading—and the old soldier stood at attention behind her, with such a blending of pride and pity on his face as it was strange to see:—

[1] "The Mail Coach it was that distributed over the face of the land, like the opening of apocalyptic vials, the heart-shaking news of Trafalgar, of Salamanca, of Vittoria, of Waterloo. . . The grandest chapter of our experience, within the whole Mail Coach service, was on those occasions when we went down from London with the news of Victory. Five years of life it was worth paying down for the privilege of an outside place."—DE QUINCEY.

"DOWNING STREET,
"*June* 22, 1815, 1 A.M."

"That's one in the morning," gasped the Postman; "beg your pardon, mum."

But though he apologized, he could not refrain from echoing here and there a weighty word. "Glorious victory,"—"Two hundred pieces of artillery,"—"Immense quantity of ammunition,"—and so forth.

"The loss of the British Army upon this occasion has unfortunately been most severe. It had not been possible to make out a return of the killed and wounded when Major Percy left headquarters. The names of the officers killed and wounded, as far as they can be collected, are annexed.

"I have the honour——"

"The list, Aunt! Read the list!"

"My love—my darling—let us go in and——"

"No. Now! now!"

To one thing the supremely afflicted are entitled in their sorrow—to be obeyed—and yet it is the last kindness that people commonly will do them. But Miss Jessamine did. Steadying her voice, as best she might, she read on, and the old soldier stood bareheaded to hear that first Roll of the Dead at Waterloo, which began with the Duke of Brunswick, and ended with Ensign Brown.[1] Five-and-thirty British Captains fell asleep that day on the Bed of Honour, and the Black Captain slept among them.

* * * * *

There are killed and wounded by war, of whom no returns reach Downing Street.

Three days later, the Captain's wife had joined

[1] "Brunswick's fated chieftain" fell at Quatre Bras, the day before Waterloo, but this first (very imperfect) list, as it appeared in the newspapers of the day, did begin with his name, and end with that of an Ensign Brown.

him, and Miss Jessamine was kneeling by the cradle of their orphan son, a purple-red morsel of humanity, with conspicuously golden hair.

"Will he live, Doctor?"

"Live? GOD bless my soul, ma'am! Look at him! The young Jackanapes!"

CHAPTER II

"And he wandered away and away
With Nature, the dear old Nurse."
LONGFELLOW.

THE Grey Goose remembered quite well the year that Jackanapes began to walk, for it was the year that the speckled hen for the first time in all her motherly life got out of patience when she was sitting. She had been rather proud of the eggs—they were unusually large—but she never felt quite comfortable on them; and whether it was because she used to get cramp, and go off the nest, or because the season was bad, or what, she never could tell, but every egg was addled but one, and the one that did hatch gave her more trouble than any chick she had ever reared.

It was a fine, downy, bright yellow little thing, but it had a monstrous big nose and feet, and such an ungainly walk as she knew no other instance of in her well-bred and high-stepping family. And as to behaviour, it was not that it was either quarrelsome or moping, but simply unlike the rest. When the other chicks hopped and cheeped on the Green about their mother's feet, this solitary yellow brat went waddling off on its own responsibility, and do or cluck what the speckled hen would, it went to play in the Pond.

It was off one day as usual, and the hen was fussing and fuming after it, when the Postman, going to deliver a letter at Miss Jessamine's door, was

nearly knocked over by the good lady herself, who, bursting out of the house with her cap just off and her bonnet just not on, fell into his arms, crying—

"Baby! Baby! Jackanapes! Jackanapes!"

If the Postman loved anything on earth, he loved the Captain's yellow-haired child, so propping Miss Jessamine against her own door-post, he followed the direction of her trembling fingers and made for the Green.

Jackanapes had had the start of the Postman by nearly ten minutes. The world—the round green world with an oak tree on it—was just becoming very interesting to him. He had tried, vigorously but ineffectually, to mount a passing pig the last time he was taken out walking; but then he was encumbered with a nurse. Now he was his own master, and might, by courage and energy, become the master of that delightful, downy, dumpy, yellow thing that was bobbing along over the green grass in front of him. Forward! Charge! He aimed well, and grabbed it, but only to feel the delicious downiness and dumpiness slipping through his fingers as he fell upon his face. "Quawk!" said the yellow thing, and wobbled off sideways. It was this oblique movement that enabled Jackanapes to come up with it, for it was bound for the Pond, and therefore obliged to come back into line. He failed again from top-heaviness, and his prey escaped sideways as before, and, as before, lost ground in getting back to the direct road to the Pond.

And at the Pond the Postman found them both, one yellow thing rocking safely on the ripples that lie beyond duck-weed, and the other washing his draggled frock with tears, because he too had tried to sit upon the Pond, and it wouldn't hold him.

CHAPTER III

". . . If studious, copie fair what time hath blurred,
Redeem truth from his jawes; if souldier,
Chase brave employments with a naked sword
Throughout the world. Fool not; for all may have,
If they dare try, a glorious life, or grave.

* * * * *

In brief, acquit thee bravely: play the man.
Look not on pleasures as they come, but go.
Defer not the least vertue: life's poore span
Make not an ell, by trifling in thy woe.
If thou do ill, the joy fades, not the pains.
If well: the pain doth fade, the joy remains."

GEORGE HERBERT.

YOUNG Mrs. Johnson, who was a mother of many, hardly knew which to pity more; Miss Jessamine for having her little ways and her antimacassars rumpled by a young Jackanapes; or the boy himself, for being brought up by an old maid.

Oddly enough, she would probably have pitied neither, had Jackanapes been a girl. (One is so apt to think that what works smoothest works to the highest ends, having no patience for the results of friction.) That Father in GOD, who bade the young men to be pure, and the maidens brave, greatly disturbed a member of his congregation, who thought that the great preacher had made a slip of the tongue.

"That the girls should have purity, and the boys courage, is what you would say, good Father?"

"Nature has done that," was the reply; "I meant what I said."

In good sooth, a young maid is all the better for

learning some robuster virtues than maidenliness and not to move the antimacassars. And the robuster virtues require some fresh air and freedom. As, on the other hand, Jackanapes (who had a boy's full share of the little beast and the young monkey in his natural composition) was none the worse, at his tender years, for learning some maidenliness—so far as maidenliness means decency, pity, unselfishness, and pretty behaviour.

And it is due to him to say that he was an obedient boy, and a boy whose word could be depended on, long before his grandfather the General came to live at the Green.

He was obedient; that is he did what his great-aunt told him. But—oh dear! oh dear!—the pranks he played, which it had never entered into her head to forbid!

It was when he had just been put into skeletons (frocks never suited him) that he became very friendly with Master Tony Johnson, a younger brother of the young gentleman who sat in the puddle on purpose. Tony was not enterprising, and Jackanapes led him by the nose. One summer's evening they were out late, and Miss Jessamine was becoming anxious, when Jackanapes presented himself with a ghastly face all besmirched with tears. He was unusually subdued.

"I'm afraid," he sobbed; "if you please, I'm very much afraid that Tony Johnson's dying in the churchyard."

Miss Jessamine was just beginning to be distracted, when she smelt Jackanapes.

"You naughty, naughty boys! Do you mean to tell me that you've been smoking?"

"Not pipes," urged Jackanapes; "upon my honour, Aunty, not pipes. Only segars like Mr.

Johnson's ! and only made of brown paper with a very very little tobacco from the shop inside them."

Whereupon, Miss Jessamine sent a servant to the churchyard, who found Tony Johnson lying on a tombstone, very sick, and having ceased to entertain any hopes of his own recovery.

If it could be possible that any " unpleasantness " could arise between two such amiable neighbours as Miss Jessamine and Mrs. Johnson—and if the still more incredible paradox can be that ladies may differ over a point on which they are agreed—that point was the admitted fact that Tony Johnson was " delicate," and the difference lay chiefly in this : Mrs. Johnson said that Tony was delicate—meaning that he was more finely strung, more sensitive, a properer subject for pampering and petting than Jackanapes, and that, consequently, Jackanapes was to blame for leading Tony into scrapes which resulted in his being chilled, frightened, or (most frequently) sick. But when Miss Jessamine said that Tony Johnson was delicate, she meant that he was more puling, less manly, and less healthily brought up than Jackanapes, who, when they got into mischief together, was certainly not to blame because his friend could not get wet, sit a kicking donkey, ride in the giddy-go-round, bear the noise of a cracker, or smoke brown paper with impunity, as he could.

Not that there was ever the slightest quarrel between the ladies. It never even came near it, except the day after Tony had been so very sick with riding Bucephalus in the giddy-go-round. Mrs. Johnson had explained to Miss Jessamine that the reason Tony was so easily upset, was the unusual sensitiveness (as a doctor had explained it to her) of the nervous centres in her family—" Fiddlestick ! " So Mrs. Johnson understood Miss Jessamine to say,

but it appeared that she only said "Treaclestick!" which is quite another thing, and of which Tony was undoubtedly fond.

It was at the Fair that Tony was made ill by riding on Bucephalus. Once a year the Goose Green became the scene of a carnival. First of all, carts and caravans were rumbling up all along, day and night. Jackanapes could hear them as he lay in bed, and could hardly sleep for speculating what booths and whirligigs he should find fairly established, when he and his dog Spitfire went out after breakfast. As a matter of fact, he seldom had to wait so long for news of the Fair. The Postman knew the window out of which Jackanapes' yellow head would come, and was ready with his report.

"Royal Theayter, Master Jackanapes, in the old place, but be careful o' them seats, sir; they're rickettier than ever. Two sweets and a ginger-beer under the oak tree, and the Flying Boats is just a-coming along the road."

No doubt it was partly because he had already suffered severely in the Flying Boats, that Tony collapsed so quickly in the giddy-go-round. He only mounted Bucephalus (who was spotted, and had no tail) because Jackanapes urged him, and held out the ingenious hope that the round-and-round feeling would very likely cure the up-and-down sensation. It did not, however, and Tony tumbled off during the first revolution.

Jackanapes was not absolutely free from qualms, but having once mounted the Black Prince he stuck to him as a horseman should. During the first round he waved his hat, and observed with some concern that the Black Prince had lost an ear since last Fair; at the second, he looked a little pale, but sat upright, though somewhat unnecessarily rigid; at the third

round he shut his eyes. During the fourth his hat fell off, and he clasped his horse's neck. By the fifth he had laid his yellow head against the Black Prince's mane, and so clung anyhow till the hobby-horses stopped, when the proprietor assisted him to alight, and he sat down rather suddenly and said he had enjoyed it very much.

The Grey Goose always ran away at the first approach of the caravans, and never came back to the Green till there was nothing left of the Fair but footmarks and oyster-shells. Running away was her pet principle; the only system, she maintained, by which you can live long and easily, and lose nothing. If you run away when you see danger, you can come back when all is safe. Run quickly, return slowly, hold your head high, and gabble as loud as you can, and you'll preserve the respect of the Goose Green to a peaceful old age. Why should you struggle and get hurt, if you can lower your head and swerve, and not lose a feather? Why in the world should any one spoil the pleasure of life, or risk his skin, if he can help it?

"'What's the use?'
Said the Goose."

Before answering which one might have to consider what world—which life—and whether his skin were a goose-skin; but the Grey Goose's head would never have held all that.

Grass soon grows over footprints, and the village children took the oyster-shells to trim their gardens with; but the year after Tony rode Bucephalus there lingered another relic of Fair-time, in which Jackanapes was deeply interested. "The Green" proper was originally only part of a straggling common, which in its turn merged into some wilder waste land

where gipsies sometimes squatted if the authorities would allow them, especially after the annual Fair. And it was after the Fair that Jackanapes, out rambling by himself, was knocked over by the Gipsy's son riding the Gipsy's red-haired pony at break-neck pace across the common.

Jackanapes got up and shook himself, none the worse, except for being heels over head in love with the red-haired pony. What a rate he went at! How he spurned the ground with his nimble feet! How his red coat shone in the sunshine! And what bright eyes peeped out of his dark forelock as it was blown by the wind!

The Gipsy boy had had a fright, and he was willing enough to reward Jackanapes for not having been hurt, by consenting to let him have a ride.

"Do you mean to kill the little fine gentleman, and swing us all on the gibbet, you rascal?" screamed the Gipsy-mother, who came up just as Jackanapes and the pony set off.

"He would get on," replied her son. "It'll not kill him. He'll fall on his yellow head, and it's as tough as a cocoa-nut."

But Jackanapes did not fall. He stuck to the red-haired pony as he had stuck to the hobby-horse; but oh, how different the delight of this wild gallop with flesh and blood! Just as his legs were beginning to feel as if he did not feel them, the Gipsy boy cried "Lollo!" Round went the pony so unceremoniously, that, with as little ceremony, Jackanapes clung to his neck, and he did not properly recover himself before Lollo stopped with a jerk at the place where they had started.

"Is his name Lollo?" asked Jackanapes, his hand lingering in the wiry mane.

"Yes."

"What does Lollo means?"

"Red."

"Is Lollo your pony?"

"No. My father's." And the Gipsy boy led Lollo away.

At the first opportunity Jackanapes stole away again to the common. This time he saw the Gipsy-father, smoking a dirty pipe.

"Lollo is your pony, isn't he?" said Jackanapes.

"Yes."

"He's a very nice one."

"He's a racer."

"You don't want to sell him, do you?"

"Fifteen pounds," said the Gipsy-father; and Jackanapes sighed and went home again. That very afternoon he and Tony rode the two donkeys, and Tony managed to get thrown, and even Jackanapes' donkey kicked. But it was jolting, clumsy work after the elastic swiftness and the dainty mischief of the red-haired pony.

A few days later Miss Jessamine spoke very seriously to Jackanapes. She was a good deal agitated as she told him that his grandfather the General was coming to the Green, and that he must be on his very best behaviour during the visit. If it had been feasible to leave off calling him Jackanapes and to get used to his baptismal name of Theodore before the day after to-morrow (when the General was due), it would have been satisfactory. But Miss Jessamine feared it would be impossible in practice, and she had scruples about it on principle. It would not seem quite truthful, although she had always most fully intended that he should be called Theodore when he had outgrown the ridiculous appropriateness of his nickname. The fact was that he had not

outgrown it, but he must take care to remember who was meant when his grandfather said Theodore.

Indeed for that matter he must take care all along.

"You are apt to be giddy, Jackanapes," said Miss Jessamine.

"Yes, Aunt," said Jackanapes, thinking of the hobby-horses.

"You are a good boy, Jackanapes. Thank GOD, I can tell your grandfather that. An obedient boy, an honourable boy, and a kind-hearted boy. But you are—in short, you *are* a Boy, Jackanapes. And I hope"—added Miss Jessamine, desperate with the results of experience—"that the General knows that Boys will be Boys."

What mischief could be foreseen, Jackanapes promised to guard against. He was to keep his clothes and his hands clean, to look over his catechism, not to put sticky things in his pockets, to keep that hair of his smooth—("It's the wind that blows it, Aunty," said Jackanapes—"I'll send by the coach for some bear's-grease," said Miss Jessamine, tying a knot in her pocket-handkerchief)—not to burst in at the parlour-door, not to talk at the top of his voice, not to crumple his Sunday frill, and to sit quite quiet during the sermon, to be sure to say "sir" to the General, to be careful about rubbing his shoes on the door-mat, and to bring his lesson-books to his aunt at once that she might iron down the dogs' ears. The General arrived, and for the first day all went well, except that Jackanapes' hair was as wild as usual, for the hair-dresser had no bear's-grease left. He began to feel more at ease with his grandfather, and disposed to talk confidentially with him, as he did with the Postman. All that the General felt it would take too long to tell, but the

result was the same. He was disposed to talk confidentially with Jackanapes.

"Mons'ous pretty place this," he said, looking out of the lattice on to the Green, where the grass was vivid with sunset, and the shadows were long and peaceful.

"You should see it in Fair-week, sir," said Jackanapes, shaking his yellow mop, and leaning back in his one of the two Chippendale arm-chairs in which they sat.

"A fine time that, eh?" said the General, with a twinkle in his left eye. (The other was glass.)

Jackanapes shook his hair once more. "I enjoyed this last one the best of all," he said. "I'd so much money."

"By George, it's not a common complaint in these bad times. How much had ye?"

"I'd two shillings. A new shilling Aunty gave me, and elevenpence I had saved up, and a penny from the Postman—*sir!*" added Jackanapes with a jerk, having forgotten it.

"And how did ye spend it—*sir?*" inquired the General.

Jackanapes spread his ten fingers on the arms of his chair, and shut his eyes that he might count the more conscientiously.

"Watch-stand for Aunty, threepence. Trumpet for myself, twopence, that's fivepence. Ginger-nuts for Tony, twopence, and a mug with a Grenadier on for the Postman, fourpence, that's elevenpence. Shooting-gallery a penny, that's a shilling. Giddy-go-round, a penny, that's one and a penny. Treating Tony, one and twopence. Flying Boats (Tony paid for himself), a penny, one and threepence. Shooting-gallery again, one and fourpence. Fat Woman, a penny, one and fivepence. Giddy-go-

round again, one and sixpence. Shooting-gallery, one and sevenpence. Treating Tony, and then he wouldn't shoot, so I did, one and eightpence. Living Skeleton, a penny—no, Tony treated me, the Living Skeleton doesn't count. Skittles, a penny, one and ninepence. Mermaid (but when we got inside she was dead), a penny, one and tenpence. Theatre, a penny ('Priscilla Partington, or the Green Lane Murder.' A beautiful young lady, sir, with pink cheeks and a real pistol), that's one and elevenpence. Ginger-beer, a penny (I *was* so thirsty!), two shillings. And then the Shooting-gallery man gave me a turn for nothing, because, he said, I was a real gentleman, and spent my money like a man."

"So you do, sir, so you do!" cried the General. "Why, sir, you spend it like a prince. And now I suppose you've not got a penny in your pocket?"

"Yes, I have," said Jackanapes. "Two pennies. They are saving up." And Jackanapes jingled them with his hand.

"You don't want money except at Fair-times, I suppose?" said the General.

Jackanapes shook his mop.

"If I could have as much as I want, I should know what to buy," said he.

"And how much do you want, if you could get it?"

"Wait a minute, sir, till I think what twopence from fifteen pounds leaves. Two from nothing you can't, but borrow twelve. Two from twelve, ten, and carry one. Please remember ten, sir, when I ask you. One from nothing you can't, borrow twenty. One from twenty, nineteen, and carry one. One from fifteen, fourteen. Fourteen pounds nineteen and—what did I tell you to remember?"

"Ten," said the General.

"Fourteen pounds nineteen shillings and tenpence then, is what I want," said Jackanapes.

"Bless my soul, what for?"

"To buy Lollo with. Lollo means red, sir. The Gipsy's red-haired pony, sir. Oh, he *is* beautiful! You should see his coat in the sunshine! You should see his mane! You should see his tail! Such little feet, sir, and they go like lightning! Such a dear face, too, and eyes like a mouse! But he's a racer, and the Gipsy wants fifteen pounds for him."

"If he's a racer, you couldn't ride him. Could you?"

"No—o, sir, but I can stick to him. I did the other day."

"You did, did you? Well, I'm fond of riding myself, and if the beast is as good as you say, he might suit me."

"You're too tall for Lollo, I think," said Jackanapes, measuring his grandfather with his eye.

"I can double up my legs, I suppose. We'll have a look at him to-morrow."

"Don't you weigh a good deal?" asked Jackanapes.

"Chiefly waistcoats," said the General, slapping the breast of his military frock-coat. "We'll have the little racer on the Green the first thing in the morning. Glad you mentioned it, grandson. Glad you mentioned it."

The General was as good as his word. Next morning the Gipsy and Lollo, Miss Jessamine, Jackanapes and his grandfather and his dog Spitfire, were all gathered at one end of the Green in a group, which so aroused the innocent curiosity of Mrs. Johnson, as she saw it from one of her upper windows, that she and the children took their early promenade rather

earlier than usual. The General talked to the Gipsy, and Jackanapes fondled Lollo's mane, and did not know whether he should be glad or miserable if his grandfather bought him.

"Jackanapes!"

"Yes, sir!"

"I've bought Lollo, but I believe you were right. He hardly stands high enough for me. If you can ride him to the other end of the Green, I'll give him to you."

How Jackanapes tumbled on to Lollo's back he never knew. He had just gathered up the reins when the Gipsy-father took him by the arm.

"If you want to make Lollo go fast, my little gentleman——"

"*I* can make him go!" said Jackanapes, and drawing from his pocket the trumpet he had bought in the Fair, he blew a blast both loud and shrill.

Away went Lollo, and away went Jackanapes' hat. His golden hair flew out, an aureole from which his cheeks shone red and distended with trumpeting. Away went Spitfire, mad with the rapture of the race, and the wind in his silky ears. Away went the geese, the cocks, the hens, and the whole family of Johnson. Lucy clung to her mamma, Jane saved Emily by the gathers of her gown, and Tony saved himself by a somersault.

The Grey Goose was just returning when Jackanapes and Lollo rode back, Spitfire panting behind.

"Good, my little gentleman, good!" said the Gipsy. "You were born to the saddle. You've the flat thigh, the strong knee, the wiry back, and the light caressing hand; all you want is to learn the whisper. Come here!"

"What was that dirty fellow talking about, grandson?" asked the General.



"Away went Lollo."

(p. 26.)

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" I can't tell you, sir. It's a secret."

They were sitting in the window again, in the two Chippendale arm-chairs, the General devouring every line of his grandson's face, with strange spasms crossing his own.

" You must love your aunt very much, Jackanapes? "

" I do, sir," said Jackanapes warmly.

" And whom do you love next best to your aunt? "

The ties of blood were pressing very strongly on the General himself, and perhaps he thought of Lollo. But Love is not bought in a day, even with fourteen pounds nineteen shillings and tenpence. Jackanapes answered quite readily, " The Postman."

" Why the Postman? "

" He knew my father," said Jackanapes, " and he tells me about him, and about his black mare. My father was a soldier, a brave soldier. He died at Waterloo. When I grow up I want to be a soldier too."

" So you shall, my boy. So you shall."

" Thank you, Grandfather. Aunty doesn't want me to be a soldier for fear of being killed."

" Bless my life! Would she have you get into a feather-bed and stay there? Why, you might be killed by a thunderbolt, if you were a butter-merchant! "

" So I might. I shall tell her so. What a funny fellow you are, sir! I say, do you think my father knew the Gipsy's secret? The Postman says he used to whisper to his black mare."

" Your father was taught to ride as a child, by one of those horsemen of the East who swoop and dart and wheel about a plain like swallows in autumn. Grandson! love me a little too. I can tell you more about your father than the Postman can."

"I do love you," said Jackanapes. "Before you came I was frightened. I'd no notion you were so nice."

"Love me always, boy, whatever I do or leave undone. And—GOD help me—whatever you do or leave undone, I'll love you! There shall never be a cloud between us for a day; no, sir, not for an hour. We're imperfect enough, all of us, we needn't be so bitter; and life is uncertain enough at its safest, we needn't waste its opportunities. Look at me! Here sit I, after a dozen battles and some of the worst climates in the world, and by yonder lych-gate lies your mother, who didn't move five miles, I suppose, from your aunt's apron-strings,—dead in her teens; my golden-haired daughter, whom I never saw."

Jackanapes was terribly troubled.

"Don't cry, Grandfather," he pleaded, his own blue eyes round with tears. "I will love you very much, and I will try to be very good. But I should like to be a soldier."

"You shall, my boy, you shall. You've more claims for a commission than you know of. Cavalry, I suppose; eh, ye young Jackanapes? Well, well; if you live to be an honour to your country, this old heart shall grow young again with pride for you; and if you die in the service of your country—GOD bless me, it can but break for ye!"

And beating the region which he said was all waistcoats, as if they stifled him, the old man got up and strode out on to the Green.

CHAPTER IV

" Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."—*John* xv. 13.

TWENTY and odd years later the Grey Goose was still alive, and in full possession of her faculties, such as they were. She lived slowly and carefully, and she lived long. So did Miss Jessamine; but the General was dead.

He had lived on the Green for many years, during which he and the Postman saluted each other with a punctiliousness that it almost drilled one to witness. He would have completely spoiled Jackanapes if Miss Jessamine's conscience would have let him; otherwise he somewhat dragooned his neighbours, and was as positive about parish matters as a rate-payer about the army. A stormy-tempered, tender-hearted soldier, irritable with the suffering of wounds of which he never spoke, whom all the village followed to his grave with tears.

The General's death was a great shock to Miss Jessamine, and her nephew stayed with her for some little time after the funeral. Then he was obliged to join his regiment, which was ordered abroad.

One effect of the conquest which the General had gained over the affections of the village, was a considerable abatement of the popular prejudice against " the military." Indeed the village was now somewhat importantly represented in the army. There was the General himself, and the Postman, and the

Black Captain's tablet in the church, and Jackanapes, and Tony Johnson, and a Trumpeter.

Tony Johnson had no more natural taste for fighting than for riding, but he was as devoted as ever to Jackanapes, and that was how it came about that Mr. Johnson bought him a commission in the same cavalry regiment that the General's grandson (whose commission had been given him by the Iron Duke) was in, and that he was quite content to be the butt of the mess where Jackanapes was the hero; and that when Jackanapes wrote home to Miss Jessamine, Tony wrote with the same purpose to his mother; namely, to demand her congratulations that they were on active service at last, and were ordered to the front. And he added a postscript to the effect that she could have no idea how popular Jackanapes was, nor how splendidly he rode the wonderful red charger whom he had named after his old friend Lollo.

* * * * *

"Sound Retire!"

A Boy Trumpeter, grave with the weight of responsibilities and accoutrements beyond his years, and stained, so that his own mother would not have known him, with the sweat and dust of battle, did as he was bid; and then pushing his trumpet pettishly aside, adjusted his weary legs for the hundredth time to the horse, which was a world too big for him, and muttering, "'Tain't a pretty tune," tried to see something of this his first engagement, before it came to an end.

Being literally in the thick of it, he could hardly have seen less or known less of what happened in that particular skirmish if he had been at home in England. For many good reasons; including dust and smoke, and that what attention he dared distract from his commanding officer was pretty well absorbed

by keeping his hard-mouthed troop-horse in hand, under pain of execration by his neighbours in the *mêlée*. By and by, when the newspapers came out, if he could get a look at one before it was thumbed to bits, he would learn that the enemy had appeared from ambush in overwhelming numbers, and that orders had been given to fall back, which was done slowly and in good order, the men fighting as they retired.

Born and bred on the Goose Green, the youngest of Mr. Johnson's gardener's numerous offspring, the boy had given his family "no peace" till they let him "go for a soldier" with Master Tony and Master Jackanapes. They consented at last, with more tears than they shed when an elder son was sent to gaol for poaching, and the boy was perfectly happy in his life, and full of *esprit de corps*. It was this which had been wounded by having to sound retreat for "the young gentlemen's regiment," the first time he served with it before the enemy, and he was also harassed by having completely lost sight of Master Tony. There had been some hard fighting before the backward movement began, and he had caught sight of him once, but not since. On the other hand, all the pulses of his village pride had been stirred by one or two visions of Master Jackanapes whirling about on his wonderful horse. He had been easy to distinguish, since an eccentric blow had bared his head without hurting it, for his close golden mop of hair gleamed in the hot sunshine as brightly as the steel of the sword flashing round it.

Of the missiles that fell pretty thickly, the Boy Trumpeter did not take much notice. First, one can't attend to everything, and his hands were full. Secondly, one gets used to anything. Thirdly, experience soon teaches one, in spite of proverbs, how

very few bullets find their billet. Far more unnerving is the mere suspicion of fear or even of anxiety in the human mass around you. The Boy was beginning to wonder if there were any dark reason for the increasing pressure, and whether they would be allowed to move back more quickly, when the smoke in front lifted for a moment, and he could see the plain, and the enemy's line some two hundred yards away.

And across the plain between them, he saw Master Jackanapes galloping alone at the top of Lollo's speed, their faces to the enemy, his golden head at Lollo's ear.

But at this moment noise and smoke seemed to burst out on every side, the officer shouted to him to sound retire, and between trumpeting and bumping about on his horse, he saw and heard no more of the incidents of his first battle.

Tony Johnson was always unlucky with horses, from the days of the giddy-go-round onwards. On this day—of all days in the year—his own horse was on the sick list, and he had to ride an inferior, ill-conditioned beast, and fell off that, at the very moment when it was a matter of life or death to be able to ride away. The horse fell on him, but struggled up again, and Tony managed to keep hold of it. It was in trying to remount that he discovered, by helplessness and anguish, that one of his legs was crushed and broken, and that no feat of which he was master would get him into the saddle. Not able even to stand alone, awkwardly, agonizingly unable to mount his restive horse, his life was yet so strong within him! And on one side of him rolled the dust and smoke-cloud of his advancing foes, and on the other, that which covered his retreating friends.



"He drew out his pistol, and waited for the end."
(p. 33.)

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He turned one piteous gaze after them, with a bitter twinge, not of reproach, but of loneliness; and then, dragging himself up by the side of his horse, he turned the other way and drew out his pistol, and waited for the end. Whether he waited seconds or minutes he never knew, before some one gripped him by the arm.

"*Jackanapes! GOD bless you!* It's my left leg. If you *could* get me on——"

It was like Tony's luck that his pistol went off at his horse's tail, and made it plunge; but Jackanapes threw him across the saddle.

"Hold on anyhow, and stick your spur in. I'll lead him. Keep your head down, they're firing high."

And Jackanapes laid his head down—to Lollo's ear.

It was when they were fairly off, that a sudden up-springing of the enemy in all directions had made it necessary to change the gradual retirement of our force into as rapid a retreat as possible. And when Jackanapes became aware of this, and felt the lagging and swerving of Tony's horse, he began to wish he had thrown his friend across his own saddle, and left their lives to Lollo.

When Tony became aware of it, several things came into his head. 1. That the dangers of their ride for life were now more than doubled. 2. That if Jackanapes and Lollo were not burdened with him they would undoubtedly escape. 3. That Jackanapes' life was infinitely valuable, and his—Tony's—was not. 4. That this—if he could seize it—was the supremest of all the moments in which he had tried to assume the virtues which Jackanapes had by nature; and that if he could be courageous and unselfish now——

He caught at his own reins and spoke very loud——

"Jackanapes! It won't do. You and Lollo must go on. Tell the fellows I gave you back to them, with all my heart. Jackanapes, if you love me, leave me!"

There was a daffodil light over the evening sky in front of them, and it shone strangely on Jackanapes' hair and face. He turned with an odd look in his eyes that a vainer man than Tony Johnson might have taken for brotherly pride. Then he shook his mop, and laughed at him.

"*Leave you?* To save my skin? No, Tony, not to save my soul!"

CHAPTER V

"MR. VALIANT *summoned. His will. His last words.*
"Then said he, 'I am going to my Father's. . . . My Sword I give to him that shall succeed me in my Pilgrimage, and my Courage and Skill to him that can get it.' . . . And as he went down deeper, he said, 'Grave, where is thy Victory?'
"So he passed over, and all the Trumpets sounded for him on the other side."—BUNYAN'S *Pilgrim's Progress.*

COMING out of a hospital-tent, at head-quarters, the surgeon cannoned against, and rebounded from, another officer; a sallow man, not young, with a face worn more by ungentle experiences than by age; with weary eyes, that kept their own counsel, iron-grey hair, and a moustache that was as if a raven had laid its wing across his lips and sealed them.

"Well?"

"Beg pardon, Major. Didn't see you. Oh, compound fracture and bruises, but it's all right. He'll pull through."

"Thank GOD."

It was probably an involuntary expression, for prayer and praise were not much in the Major's line, as a jerk of the surgeon's head would have betrayed to an observer. He was a bright little man, with his feelings showing all over him, but with gallantry and contempt of death enough for both sides of his profession; who took a cool head, a white handkerchief, and a case of instruments where other men went hot-blooded with weapons, and who was the biggest gossip, male or female, of the regiment. Not even the Major's taciturnity daunted him.

" Didn't think he'd as much pluck about him as he has. He'll do all right if he doesn't fret himself into a fever about poor Jackanapes."

" Whom are you talking about? " asked the Major hoarsely.

" Young Johnson. He——"

" What about Jackanapes? "

" Don't you know? Sad business. Rode back for Johnson, and brought him in; but, monstrous ill-luck, hit as they rode. Left lung——"

" Will he recover? "

" No. Sad business. What a frame—what limbs —what health—and what good looks! Finest young fellow——"

" Where is he? "

" In his own tent," said the surgeon sadly.

The Major wheeled and left him.

* * * * *

" Can I do anything else for you? "

" Nothing, thank you. Except—Major! I wish I could get you to appreciate Johnson."

" This is not an easy moment, Jackanapes."

" Let me tell you, sir—*he* never will—that if he could have driven me from him, he would be lying yonder at this moment, and I should be safe and sound."

The Major laid his hand over his mouth, as if to keep back a wish he would have been ashamed to utter.

" I've known old Tony from a child. He's a fool on impulse, a good man and a gentleman in principle. And he acts on principle, which it's not every—some water, please! Thank you, sir. It's very hot, and yet one's feet get uncommonly cold. Oh, thank you, thank you. He's no fire-eater, but he has a trained conscience and a tender heart, and he'll do his duty

when a braver and more selfish man might fail you. But he wants encouragement; and when I'm gone——"

"He shall have encouragement. You have my word for it. Can I do nothing else?"

"Yes, Major. A favour."

"Thank you, Jackanapes."

"Be Lollo's master, and love him as well as you can. He's used to it."

"Wouldn't you rather Johnson had him?"

The blue eyes twinkled in spite of mortal pain.

"Tony *rides* on principle, Major. His legs are bolsters, and will be to the end of the chapter. I couldn't insult dear Lollo, but if you don't care——"

"Whilst I live——which will be longer than I desire or deserve——Lollo shall want nothing, but ——you. I have too little tenderness for——my dear boy, you're faint. Can you spare me for a moment?"

"No, stay—Major!"

"What? What?"

"My head drifts so—if you wouldn't mind."

"Yes! Yes!"

"Say a prayer by me. Out loud, please, I am getting deaf."

"My dearest Jackanapes—my dear boy——"

"One of the Church Prayers—Parade Service, you know——"

"I see. But the fact is—GOD forgive me, Jackanapes—I'm a very different sort of fellow to some of you youngsters. Look here, let me fetch——"

But Jackanapes' hand was in his, and it wouldn't let go.

There was a brief and bitter silence.

"'Pon my soul I can only remember the little one at the end."

"Please," whispered Jackanapes.

Pressed by the conviction that what little he could do it was his duty to do, the Major—kneeling—bared his head, and spoke loudly, clearly, and very reverently—

"The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ——"

Jackanapes moved his left hand to his right one, which still held the Major's—

"—The love of GOD."

And with that—Jackanapes died.

CHAPTER VI

"Und so ist der blaue Himmel grösser als jedes Gewölk darin, und dauerhafter dazu."—JEAN PAUL RICHTER.

JACKANAPES' death was sad news for the Goose Green, a sorrow just qualified by honourable pride in his gallantry and devotion. Only the Cobbler dissented, but that was his way. He said he saw nothing in it but foolhardiness and vainglory. They might both have been killed, as easy as not, and then where would ye have been? A man's life was a man's life, and one life was as good as another. No one would catch him throwing his away. And, for that matter, Mrs. Johnson could spare a child a great deal better than Miss Jessamine.

But the parson preached Jackanapes' funeral sermon on the text, "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it;" and all the village went and wept to hear him.

Nor did Miss Jessamine see her loss from the Cobbler's point of view. On the contrary, Mrs. Johnson said she never to her dying day should forget how, when she went to condole with her, the old lady came forward, with gentlewomanly self-control, and kissed her, and thanked GOD that her dear nephew's effort had been blessed with success, and that this sad war had made no gap in her friend's large and happy home circle.

"But she's a noble, unselfish woman," sobbed Mrs.

Johnson, "and she taught Jackanapes to be the same, and that's how it is that my Tony has been spared to me. And it must be sheer goodness in Miss Jessamine, for what can she know of a mother's feelings? And I'm sure most people seem to think that if you've a large family you don't know one from another any more than they do, and that a lot of children are like a lot of store-apples, if one's taken it won't be missed."

Lollo—the first Lollo, the Gipsy's Lollo—very aged, draws Miss Jessamine's bath-chair slowly up and down the Goose Green in the sunshine.

The Ex-postman walks beside him, which Lollo tolerates to the level of his shoulder. If the Postman advances any nearer to his head, Lollo quickens his pace, and were the Postman to persist in the injudicious attempt, there is, as Miss Jessamine says, no knowing what might happen.

In the opinion of the Goose Green, Miss Jessamine has borne her troubles "wonderfully." Indeed, to-day, some of the less delicate and less intimate of those who see everything from the upper windows, say (well behind her back) that "the old lady seems quite lively with her military beaux again."

The meaning of this is, that Captain Johnson is leaning over one side of her chair, whilst by the other bends a brother officer who is staying with him, and who has manifested an extraordinary interest in Lollo. He bends lower and lower, and Miss Jessamine calls to the Postman to request Lollo to be kind enough to stop, whilst she is fumbling for something which always hangs by her side, and has got entangled with her spectacles.

It is a twopenny trumpet, bought years ago in the village Fair, and over it she and Captain Johnson tell, as best they can, between them, the story of

Jackanapes' ride across the Goose Green; and how he won Lollo—the Gipsy's Lollo—the racer Lollo—dear Lollo—faithful Lollo—Lollo the never vanquished —Lollo the tender servant of his old mistress. And Lollo's ears twitch at every mention of his name.

Their hearer does not speak, but he never moves his eyes from the trumpet, and when the tale is told, he lifts Miss Jessamine's hand and presses his heavy black moustache in silence to her trembling fingers.

The sun, setting gently to his rest, embroiders the sombre foliage of the oak tree with threads of gold. The Grey Goose is sensible of an atmosphere of repose, and puts up one leg for the night. The grass glows with a more vivid green, and, in answer to a ringing call from Tony, his sisters, fluttering over the daisies in pale-hued muslins, come out of their ever-open door, like pretty pigeons from a dovecot.

And, if the good gossips' eyes do not deceive them, all the Miss Johnsons, and both the officers, go wandering off into the lanes, where bryony wreaths still twine about the brambles.

* * * * *

A sorrowful story, and ending badly?

Nay, Jackanapes, for the end is not yet.

A life wasted that might have been useful?

Men who have died for men, in all ages, forgive the thought!

There is a heritage of heroic example and noble obligation, not reckoned in the Wealth of Nations, but essential to a nation's life; the contempt of which, in any people, may, not slowly, mean even its commercial fall.

Very sweet are the uses of prosperity, the harvests of peace and progress, the fostering sunshine of health and happiness, and length of days in the land.

But there be things—oh, sons of what has deserved

the name of Great Britain, forget it not!—"the good of" which and "the use of" which are beyond all calculation of worldly goods and earthly uses: things such as Love, and Honour, and the Soul of Man, which cannot be bought with a price, and which do not die with death. And they who would fain live happily EVER after, should not leave these things out of the lessons of their lives.



DADDY DARWIN'S DOVECOT

PREAMBLE

A SUMMER'S afternoon. Early in the summer, and late in the afternoon; with odours and colours deepening, and shadows lengthening, towards evening.

Two gaffers gossiping, seated side by side upon a Yorkshire wall. A wall of sandstone of many colours, glowing redder and yellower as the sun goes down; well cushioned with moss and lichen, and deep set in rank grass on this side, where the path runs, and in blue hyacinths on that side, where the wood is, and where—on the grey and still naked branches of young oaks—sit divers crows, not less solemn than the gaffers, and also gossiping.

One gaffer in work-day clothes, not unpicturesque of form and hue. Grey, home-knit stockings, and coat and knee-breeches of corduroy, which takes tints from Time and Weather as harmoniously as wooden palings do; so that field labourers (like some insects) seem to absorb or mimic the colours of the vegetation round them and of their native soil. That is, on work-days. Sunday-best is a different matter, and in this the other gaffer was clothed. He was dressed like the crows above him, *fit excepted:* the reason for which was, that he was only a visitor, a re-visitor to the home of his youth, and wore his Sunday (and funeral) suit to mark the holiday.

Continuing the path, a stone pack-horse track, leading past a hedge snow-white with may, and down into a little wood, from the depths of which one could hear a brook babbling. Then up across the

sunny field beyond, and yet up over another field to where the brow of the hill is crowned by old farm-buildings standing against the sky.

Down this stone path a young man going whistling home to tea. Then staying to bend a swarthy face to the white may to smell it, and then plucking a huge branch on which the blossom lies like a heavy fall of snow, and throwing that aside for a better, and tearing off another and yet another, with the prodigal recklessness of a pauper; and so, whistling, on into the wood with his arms full.

Down the sunny field, as he goes up it, a woman coming to meet him—with *her* arms full. Filled by a child with a may-white frock, and hair shining with the warm colours of the sandstone. A young woman, having a fair forehead visible a long way off, and buxom cheeks, and steadfast eyes. When they meet he kisses her, and she pulls his dark hair and smooths her own, and cuffs him in country fashion. Then they change burdens, and she takes the may into her apron (stooping to pick up fallen bits), and the child sits on the man's shoulder, and cuffs and lugs its father as the mother did, and is chidden by her and kissed by him. And all the babbling of their chiding and crowing and laughter comes across the babbling of the brook to the ears of the old gaffers gossiping on the wall.

Gaffer I. spits out an over-munched stalk of meadow soft-grass and speaks:

"D'ye see yon chap?"

Gaffer II. takes up his hat and wipes it round with a spotted handkerchief (for your Sunday hat is a heating thing for work-day wear) and puts it on, and makes reply:

"Aye. But he beats me. And—see thee!—he's t' first that's beat me yet. Why, lad! I've met young

chaps to-day I could ha' sworn to for mates of mine forty year back—if I hadn't ha' been i' t' churchyard spelling over their fathers' tumstuns ! "

" Aye. There's a many old standards gone home o' lately."

" What do they call *him ?* "

" T' young chap ? "

" Aye."

" They *call* him—Darwin."

" Dar—win ? I should know a Darwin. They're old standards, is Darwins. What's he to Daddy Darwin of t' Dovecot yonder ? "

" He *owns* t' Dovecot. Did ye see t' lass ? "

" Aye. Shoo's his missus, I reckon ? "

" Aye."

" What did they call her ? "

" Phœbe Shaw they called her. And if she'd been *my* lass—but that's nother here nor there, and he's got t' Dovecot."

" Shaw ? *They're* old standards, is Shaws. Phœbe ? They called her mother Phœbe. Phœbe Johnson. She were a dainty lass ! My father were very fond of Phœbe Johnson. He said she allus put him i' mind of our orchard on drying days ; pink and white apple-blossom and clean clothes. And yon's her daughter ? Where d'ye say t' young chap come from ? He don't look like hereabouts."

" He don't come from hereabouts. And yet he do come from hereabouts, as one may say. Look ye here. He come from t' wukhus. That's the short and the long of it."

" *The workhouse ?* "

" Aye."

Stupefaction. The crows chattering wildly overhead.

" And he owns Darwin's Dovecot ? "


LIBRARY TEACHERS' COLLEGE

"He owns Darwin's Dovecot."

"And how i' t' name o' all things did that come about?"

"Why, I'll tell thee. It was i' this fashion."

* * * * *

Not without reason does the wary writer put gossip in the mouths of gaffers rather than of gammers. Male gossips love scandal as dearly as female gossips do, and they bring to it the stronger relish and energies of their sex. But these were country gaffers, whose speech—like shadows—grows lengthy in the leisurely hours of eventide. The gentle reader shall have the tale in plain narration.

NOTE.—It will be plain to the reader that the birds here described are Rooks (*corvus frugilegus*). I have allowed myself to speak of them by their generic or family name of Crow, this being a common country practice. The genus *corvus*, or *Crow*, includes the Raven, the Carrion Crow, the Hooded Crow, the Jackdaw, and the Rook.

SCENE I

ONE Saturday night (some eighteen years earlier than the date of this gaffer-gossiping) the parson's daughter sat in her own room before the open drawer of a bandy-legged black oak table, *balancing her bags*. The bags were money-bags, and the matter shall be made clear at once.

In this parish, as in others, progress and the multiplication of weapons with which civilization and the powers of goodness push their conquests over brutality and the powers of evil, had added to the original duties of the parish priest, a multifarious and all but impracticable variety of offices; which, in ordinary and laïc conditions, would have been performed by several more or less salaried clerks, bankers, accountants, secretaries, librarians, club-committees, teachers, lecturers, discount for ready-money dealers in clothing, boots, blankets, and coal, domestic-servant agencies, caterers for the public amusement, and preservers of the public peace.

The country parson (no less than statesmen and princes, than men of science and of letters) is responsible for a great deal of his work that is really done by the help-mate—woman. This explains why five out of the young lady's money-bags bore the following inscriptions in marking-ink: "Savings' bank," "Clothing club," "Library," "Magazines and hymn-books," "Three-halfpenny club"—and only three bore reference to private funds, as—"House-money"—"Allowance"—"Charity."

It was the bag bearing this last and greatest name which the parson's daughter now seized and emptied into her lap. A ten-shilling piece, some small silver, and twopence halfpenny jingled together, and roused a silver-haired, tawny-pawed terrier, who left the hearthrug and came to smell what was the matter. His mistress's right hand—absently caressing—quieted his feelings; and with the left she held the ten-shilling piece between finger and thumb, and gazed thoughtfully at the other bags as they squatted in a helpless row, with twine-tied mouths hanging on all sides. It was only after anxious consultation with an account-book that the half-sovereign was exchanged for silver; thanks to the clothing-club bag, which looked leaner for the accommodation. In the three-halfpenny bag (which bulged with pence) some silver was further solved into copper, and the charity bag was handsomely distended before the whole lot was consigned once more to the table-drawer.

Any one accustomed to book-keeping must smile at this bag-keeping of accounts; but the parson's daughter could never " bring her mind " to keeping the funds apart on paper, and mixing the actual cash. Indeed, she could never have brought her conscience to it. Unless she had taken the tenth for " charity " from her dress and pocket-money in coin, and put it then and there into the charity bag, this self-imposed rule of the duty of almsgiving would not have been performed to her soul's peace.

The problem which had been exercising her mind that Saturday night was how to spend what was left of her benevolent fund in a treat for the children of the neighbouring workhouse. The fund was low, and this had decided the matter. The following Wednesday would be her twenty-first birthday. If the children came to tea with her, the foundation of

the entertainment would, in the natural course of things, be laid in the Vicarage kitchen. The charity bag would provide the extras of the feast. Nuts, toys, and the like.

When the parson's daughter locked the drawer of the bandy-legged table, she did so with the vigour of one who has made up her mind, and set about the rest of her Saturday night's duties without further delay.

She put out her Sunday clothes, and her Bible and Prayer-book, and class-book and pencil, on the oak chest at the foot of the bed. She brushed and combed the silver-haired terrier, who looked abjectly depressed whilst this was doing, and preposterously proud when it was done. She washed her own hair, and studied her Sunday-school lesson for the morrow whilst it was drying. She spread a coloured quilt at the foot of her white one, for the terrier to sleep on—a slur which he always deeply resented.

Then she went to bed, and slept as one ought to sleep on Saturday night, who is bound to be at the Sunday-school by 9.15 on the following morning, with a clear mind on the Rudiments of the Faith, the history of the Prophet Elisha, and the destinations of each of the parish magazines.

SCENE II

FATHERLESS—motherless—homeless !

A little workhouse-boy, with a swarthy face and tidily-cropped black hair, as short and thick as the fur of a mole, was grubbing, not quite so cleverly as a mole, in the workhouse garden.

He had been set to weed, but the weeding was very irregularly performed, for his eyes and heart were in the clouds, as he could see them over the big boundary wall. For there—now dark against the white,now white against the gray—some Air Tumbler pigeons were turning somersaults on their homeward way, at such short and regular intervals that they seemed to be tying knots in their lines of flight.

It was too much ! The small gardener shamelessly abandoned his duties, and, curving his dirty paws on each side of his mouth, threw his whole soul into shouting words of encouragement to the distant birds.

" That's a good un ! On with thee ! Over ye go ! Oo—ooray ! "

It was this last prolonged cheer which drowned the sound of footsteps on the path behind him, so that if he had been a tumbler pigeon himself he could not have jumped more nimbly when a man's hand fell upon his shoulder. Up went his arms to shield his ears from a well-merited cuffing; but Fate was kinder to him than he deserved. It was only an old man (prematurely aged with drink and consequent

poverty), whose faded eyes seemed to rekindle as he also gazed after the pigeons, and spoke as one who knows.

" Yon's Daddy Darwin's Tumblers."

This old pauper had only lately come into " the House " (the house that never was a home !), and the boy clung eagerly to his flannel sleeve, and plied him thick and fast with questions about the world without the workhouse-walls, and about the happy owner of those yet happier creatures who were free not only on the earth but in the skies.

The poor old pauper was quite as willing to talk as the boy was to listen. It restored some of that self-respect which we lose under the consequences of our follies to be able to say that Daddy Darwin and he had been mates together, and had had pigeon-fancying in common " many a long year afore " he came into the House.

And so these two made friendship over such matters as will bring man and boy together to the end of time. And the old pauper waxed eloquent on the feats of Homing Birds and Tumblers, and on the points of Almonds and Barbs, Fantails and Pouters; sprinkling his narrative also with high-sounding and heterogeneous titles, such as Dragons and Archangels, Blue Owls and Black Priests, Jacobins, English Horsemen and Trumpeters. And through much boasting of the high stakes he had had on this and that pigeon-match then, and not a few bitter complaints of the harsh hospitality of the House he " had come to " now, it never seemed to occur to him to connect the two, or to warn the lad who hung upon his lips that one cannot eat his cake with the rash appetites of youth, and yet hope to have it for the support and nourishment of his old age.

The longest story the old man told was of a " bit

of a trip " he had made to Liverpool, to see some Antwerp Carriers flown from thence to Ghent, and he fixed the date of this by remembering that his twin sons were born in his absence, and that though their birthday was the very day of the race, his " missus turned stoopid," as women (he warned the boy) are apt to do, and refused to have them christened by uncommon names connected with the fancy. All the same, he bet the lads would have been nicknamed the Antwerp Carriers, and known as such to the day of their death, if this had not come so soon and so suddenly, of croup; when (as it oddly chanced) he was off on another " bit of a holiday " to fly some pigeons of his own in Lincolnshire.

This tale had not come to an end when a voice of authority called for " Jack March," who rubbed his mole-like head and went ruefully off, muttering that he should " catch it now."

" Sure enough ! sure enough ! " chuckled the unamiable old pauper.

But again Fate was kinder to the lad than his friend. His negligent weeding passed unnoticed, because he was wanted in a hurry to join the other children in the school-room. The parson's daughter had come, the children were about to sing to her, and Jack's voice could not be dispensed with.

He " cleaned himself " with alacrity, and taking his place in the circle of boys standing with their hands behind their backs, he lifted up a voice worthy of a cathedral choir, whilst varying the monotony of sacred song by secretly snatching at the tail of the terrier as it went snuffing round the legs of the group. And in this feat he proved as much superior to the rest of the boys (who also tried it) as he excelled them in the art of singing.

Later on he learnt that the young lady had come

to invite them all to have tea with her on her birthday. Later still he found the old pauper once more, and questioned him closely about the village and the Vicarage, and as to which of the parishioners kept pigeons, and where.

And when he went to his straw bed that night, and his black head throbbed with visions and high hopes, these were not entirely of the honour of drinking tea with a pretty young lady, and how one should behave himself in such abashing circumstances. He did not even dream principally of the possibility of getting hold of that silver-haired, tawny-pawed dog by the tail under freer conditions than those of this afternoon, though that was a refreshing thought.

What kept him long awake was thinking of this. From the top of an old walnut-tree at the top of a field at the back of the Vicarage, you could see a hill, and on the top of the hill some farm buildings. And it was here (so the old pauper had told him) that those pretty pigeons lived, who, though free to play about among the clouds, yet condescended to make an earthly home—in Daddy Darwin's Dovecot.

SCENE III

Two and two, girls and boys, the young lady's guests marched down to the Vicarage. The schoolmistress was anxious that each should carry his and her tin mug, so as to give as little trouble as possible; but this was resolutely declined, much to the children's satisfaction, who had their walk with free hands, and their tea out of teacups and saucers like anybody else.

It was a fine day, and all went well. The children enjoyed themselves, and behaved admirably into the bargain. There was only one suspicion of misconduct, and the matter was so far from clear that the parson's daughter hushed it up, and, so to speak, dismissed the case.

The children were playing at some game in which Jack March was supposed to excel, but when they came to look for him he could nowhere be found. At last he was discovered, high up among the branches of an old walnut-tree at the top of the field, and though his hands were unstained and his pockets empty, the gardener, who had been the first to spy him, now loudly denounced him as an ungrateful young thief. Jack, with swollen eyes and cheeks besmirched with angry tears, was vehemently declaring that he had only climbed the tree to "have a look at Master Darwin's pigeons," and had not picked so much as a leaf, let alone a walnut; and the gardener, "shaking the truth out of him" by the collar of his fustian jacket, was preaching loudly on

the sin of adding falsehood to theft, when the parson's daughter came up, and, in the end, acquitted poor Jack, and gave him leave to amuse himself as he pleased.

It did not please Jack to play with his comrades just then. He felt sulky and aggrieved. He would have liked to play with the terrier who had stood by him in his troubles, and barked at the gardener; but that little friend now trotted after his mistress, who had gone to choir-practice.

Jack wandered about among the shrubberies. By and by he heard sounds of music, and led by these he came to a gate in a wall, dividing the Vicarage garden from the churchyard. Jack loved music, and the organ and the voices drew him on till he reached the church porch; but there he was startled by a voice that was not only not the voice of song, but was the utterance of a moan so doleful that it seemed the outpouring of all his own lonely, and outcast, and injured feelings in one comprehensive howl.

It was the voice of the silver-haired terrier. He was sitting in the porch, his nose up, his ears down, his eyes shut, his mouth open, bewailing in bitterness of spirit the second and greater crook of his lot.

To what purpose were all the caresses and care and indulgence of his mistress, the daily walks, the weekly washings and combings, the constant companionship, when she betrayed her abiding sense of his infericrity, first, by not letting him sleep on the white quilt, and secondly, by never allowing him to go to church?

Jack shared the terrier's mood. What were tea and plum-cake to him, when his pauper-breeding was so stamped upon him that the gardener was free to say—"A nice tale too! What's thou to do wi' doves, and thou a work'us lad?"—and to take for

granted that he would thieve and lie if he got the chance?

His disabilities were not the dog's, however. The parish church was his as well as another's, and he crept inside and leaned against one of the stone pillars, as if it were a big, calm friend.

Far away, under the transept, a group of boys and men held their music near to their faces in the waning light. Among them towered the burly choir-master, bâton in hand. The parson's daughter was at the organ. Well accustomed to produce his voice to good purpose, the choir-master's words were clearly to be heard throughout the building, and it was on the subject of articulation and emphasis, and the like, that he was speaking; now and then throwing in an extra aspirate in the energy of that enthusiasm without which teaching is not worth the name.

"That'll not do. We must have it altogether different. You two lads are singing like bumble-bees in a pitcher—horder there, boys!—it's no laughing matter—put down those papers and keep your eyes on me—inflate the chest—" (his own seemed to fill the field of vision) "and try and give forth those noble words as if you'd an idea what they meant."

No satire was intended or taken here, but the two boys, who were practising their duet in an anthem, laid down the music, and turned their eyes on their teacher.

"I'll run through the recitative," he added, "and take your time from the stick. And mind that OH."

The parson's daughter struck a chord, and then the burly choir-master spoke with the voice of melody:

"My heart is disquieted within me. My heart—my heart is disquieted within me. And the fear of death is fallen—is fallen upon me."

The terrier moaned without, and Jack thought no boy's voice could be worth listening to after that of the choir-master. But he was wrong. A few more notes from the organ, and then, as night-stillness in a wood is broken by the nightingale, so upon the silence of the church a boy-alto's voice broke forth in obedience to the choir-master's uplifted hand :

" *Then*, I said—I said——"

Jack gasped, but even as he strained his eyes to see what such a singer could look like, with higher, clearer notes the soprano rose above him—" Then I sa—a—id," and the duet began :

" Oh that I had wings—Oh that I had wings like a dove ! "

Soprano.—" Then would I flee away." *Alto.*—" Then would I flee away." *Together.*—" And be at rest—flee away and be at rest."

The clear young voices soared and chased each other among the arches, as if on the very pinions for which they prayed. Then—swept from their seats by an upward sweep of the choir-master's arms—the chorus rose, as birds rise, and carried on the strain.

It was not a very fine composition, but this final chorus had the singular charm of fugue. And as the voices mourned like doves, " Oh that I had wings ! " and pursued each other with the plaintive passage, " Then would I flee away—then would I flee away—away——" Jack's ears knew no weariness of the repetition. It was strangely like watching the rising and falling of Daddy Darwin's pigeons, as they tossed themselves by turns upon their homeward flight.

After the fashion of the piece and period, the chorus was repeated, and the singers rose to supreme effort. The choir-master's hands flashed hither and thither, controlling, inspiring, directing. He sang among the tenors.

Jack's voice nearly choked him with longing to sing too. Could words of man go more deeply home to a young heart caged within workhouse walls?

"Oh that I had wings like a dove! Then would I flee away—" the choir-master's white hands were fluttering downwards in the dusk, and the chorus sank with them—"flee away and be at rest!"

SCENE IV

JACK MARCH had a busy little brain, and his nature was not of the limp type that sits down with a grief. That most memorable tea-party had fired his soul with two distinct ambitions. First, to be a choir-boy; and, secondly, to dwell in Daddy Darwin's Dovecot. He turned the matter over in his mind, and patched together the following facts :

The Board of Guardians meant to apprentice him, Jack, to some master, at the earliest opportunity. Daddy Darwin (so the old pauper told him) was a strange old man, who had come down in the world, and now lived quite alone, with not a soul to help him in the house or outside it. He was " not to say *mazelin* yet, but getting helpless, and uncommon mean."

A nephew came one fine day and fetched away the old pauper, to his great delight. It was by their hands that Jack despatched a letter, which the nephew stamped and posted for him, and which was duly delivered on the following morning to Mr. Darwin of the Dovecot.

The old man had no correspondents, and he looked long at the letter before he opened it. It did credit to the teaching of the workhouse school-mistress :

" HONOURED SIR,

" They call me Jack March. I'm a work-house lad, but, Sir, I'm a good one, and the Board

means to 'prentice me next time. Sir, if you face the Board and take me out you shall never regret it. Though I says it as shouldn't I'm a handy lad. I'll clean a floor with any one, and am willing to work early and late, and at your time of life you're not what you was, and them birds must take a deal of seeing to. I can see them from the garden when I'm set to weed, and I never saw nought like them. Oh, Sir, I do beg and pray you let me mind your pigeons. You'll be none the worse of a lad about the place, and I shall be happy all the days of my life. Sir, I'm not unthankful, but, please GOD, I should like to have a home, and to be with them house doves.

" From your humble servant—hoping to be—

" JACK MARCH.

" Mr. Darwin, Sir. I love them Tumblers as if they was my own."

Daddy Darwin thought hard and thought long over that letter. He changed his mind fifty times a day. But Friday was the Board day, and when Friday came he " faced the Board." And the little workhouse lad went home to Daddy Darwin's Dovecot.

SCENE V

THE bargain was oddly made, but it worked well. Whatever Jack's parentage may have been (and he was named after the stormy month in which he had been born), the blood that ran in his veins could not have been beggars' blood. There was no hopeless, shiftless, invincible idleness about him. He found work for himself when it was not given him to do, and he attached himself passionately and proudly to all the belongings of his new home.

"Yon lad of yours seems handy enough, Daddy; —for a vagrant, as one may say."

Daddy Darwin was smoking over his garden wall, and Mrs. Shaw, from the neighbouring farm, had paused in her walk for a chat. She was a notable housewife, and there was just a touch of envy in her sense of the improved appearance of the doorsteps and other visible points of the Dovecot. Daddy Darwin took his pipe out of his mouth to make way for the force of his reply:

"*Vagrant!* Nay, missus, yon's no vagrant. *He's fettling up all along.* Jack's the sort that if he finds a key he'll look for the lock; if ye give him a knife-blade he'll fashion a heft. Why, a vagrant's a chap that, if he'd all your maester owns to-morrow, he'd be on the tramp again afore t' year were out, and three years wouldn't repair t' mischief he'd leave behind him. A vagrant's a chap that if ye lend him a thing he loses it; if ye give him a thing he abuses it——"

"That's true enough, and there's plenty servant-girls the same," put in Mrs. Shaw.

"Maybe there be, ma'am—maybe there be; vagrants' children, I reckon. But yon little chap I got from t' House comes of folk that's had stuff o' their own, and cared for it—choose who they were."

"Well, Daddy," said his neighbour, not without malice, "I'll wish you a good evening. You've got a good bargain out of the parish, it seems."

But Daddy Darwin only chuckled, and stirred up the ashes in the bowl of his pipe.

"The same to you, ma'am—the same to you. Aye! he's a good bargain—a *very* good bargain is Jack March."

It might be supposed from the foregoing dialogue that Daddy Darwin was a model householder, and the little workhouse boy the neatest creature breathing. But the gentle reader who may imagine this is much mistaken.

Daddy Darwin's Dovecot was freehold, and when he inherited it from his father there was still attached to it a good bit of the land that had passed from father to son through more generations than the church registers were old enough to record. But the few remaining acres were so heavily mortgaged that they had to be sold. So that a bit of house property elsewhere, and the old homestead itself, were all that was left. And Daddy Darwin had never been the sort of man to retrieve his luck at home, or to seek it abroad.

That he had inherited a somewhat higher and more refined nature than his neighbours had rather hindered than helped him to prosper. And he had been unlucky in love. When what energies he had were in their prime, his father's death left him with such poor prospects that the old farmer to whose

daughter he was betrothed broke off the match and married her elsewhere. His Alice was not long another man's wife. She died within a year from her wedding-day, and her husband married again within a year from her death. Her old lover was no better able to mend his broken heart than his broken fortunes. He only banished women from the Dovecot, and shut himself up from the coarse consolation of his neighbours.

In his loneliness, eating a kindly heart out in bitterness of spirit, with all that he ought to have had—

> " To plough and sow
> And reap and mow "—

gone from him, and in the hands of strangers; the pigeons, for which the Dovecot had always been famous, became the business and the pleasure of his life. But of late years his stock had dwindled, and he rarely went to pigeon-matches or competed in shows and races. A more miserable fancy rivalled his interest in pigeon-fancying. His new hobby was hoarding; and money that, a few years back, he would have freely spent to improve his breed of Tumblers or back his Homing birds he now added with stealthy pleasure to the store behind the secret panel of a fine old oak bedstead that had belonged to the Darwyn who owned Dovecot when the sixteenth century was at its latter end. In this bedstead Daddy slept lightly of late, as old men will, and he had horrid dreams, which old men need not have. The queer faces carved on the panels (one of which hid the money hole) used to frighten him when he was a child. They did not frighten him now by their grotesque ugliness, but when he looked at them, *and knew which was which*, he dreaded the dying out

of twilight into dark, and dreamed of aged men living alone, who had been murdered for their savings. These growing fears had had no small share in deciding him to try Jack March; and to see the lad growing stronger, nimbler, and more devoted to his master's interests day by day, was a nightly comfort to the poor old hoarder in the bed-head.

As to his keen sense of Jack's industry and carefulness, it was part of the incompleteness of Daddy Darwin's nature, and the ill-luck of his career, that he had a sensitive perception of order and beauty, and a shrewd observation of ways of living and qualities of character, and yet had allowed his early troubles to blight him so completely that he never put forth an effort to rise above the ruin, of which he was at least as conscious as his neighbours.

That Jack was not the neatest creature breathing, one look at him, as he stood with pigeons on his head and arms and shoulders, would have been enough to prove. As the first and readiest repudiation of his workhouse antecedents he had let his hair grow till it hung in the wildest elf-locks, and though the terms of his service with Daddy Darwin would not, in any case, have provided him with handsome clothes, such as he had were certainly not the better for any attention he bestowed upon them. As regarded the Dovecot, however, Daddy Darwin had not done more than justice to his bargain. A strong and grateful attachment to his master, and a passionate love for the pigeons he tended, kept Jack constantly busy in the service of both; the old pigeon-fancier taught him the benefits of scrupulous cleanliness in the pigeon-cote, and Jack "stoned" the kitchen-floor and the doorsteps on his own responsibility.

The time did come when he tidied up himself.



"'AYE! HE'S A GOOD BARGAIN—'"

(p. 64.)

BALMAIN COLLEGE LIBRARY

SCENE VI

DADDY DARWIN had made the first breach in his solitary life of his own free will, but it was fated to widen. The parson's daughter soon heard that he had got a lad from the workhouse, the very boy who sang so well and had climbed the walnut-tree to look at Daddy Darwin's pigeons. The most obvious parish questions at once presented themselves to the young lady's mind. "Had the boy been christened? Did he go to church and Sunday-school? Did he say his prayers and know his Catechism? Had he a Sunday suit? Would he do for the choir?"

Then, supposing (a not uncommon case) that the boy *had* been christened, *said* he said his prayers, *knew* his Catechism, and *was* ready for school, church, and choir, but had not got a Sunday suit—a fresh series of riddles propounded themselves to her busy brain. "Would her father yield up his every-day coat and take his Sunday one into week-day wear? Could the charity bag do better than pay the tailor's widow for adapting this old coat to the new chorister's back, taking it in at the seams, turning it wrong-side out, and getting new sleeves out of the old tails? Could she herself spare the boots which the village cobbler had just re-soled for her—somewhat clumsily—and would the 'allowance' bag bear this strain? Might she hope to coax an old pair of trousers out of her cousin, who was spending his Long Vacation at the Vicarage, and who never reckoned very closely with *his* allowance and kept

no charity bag at all? Lastly, would 'that old curmudgeon at the Dovecot' let his little farm-boy go to church and school and choir?"

"I must go and persuade him," said the young lady.

What she said, and what (at the time) Daddy Darwin said, Jack never knew. He was at high sport with the terrier round the big sweetbrier bush, when he saw his old master splitting the seams of his weather-beaten coat in the haste with which he plucked crimson clove carnations as if they had been dandelions, and presented them, not ungracefully, to the parson's daughter.

Jack knew why she had come, and strained his ears to catch his own name. But Daddy Darwin was promising pipings of the cloves.

"They are such dear old-fashioned things," said she, burying her nose in the bunch.

"We're old-fashioned altogether, here, Miss," said Daddy Darwin, looking wistfully at the tumble-down house behind them.

"You're very pretty here," said she, looking also, and thinking what a sketch it would make, if she could keep on friendly terms with this old recluse, and get leave to sit in the garden. Then her conscience smiting her for selfishness, she turned her big eyes on him and put out her small hand.

"I am very much obliged to you, Mr. Darwin, very much obliged to you indeed. And I hope that Jack will do credit to your kindness. And thank you so much for the cloves," she added, hastily changing a subject which had cost some argument, and which she did not wish to have re-opened.

Daddy Darwin had thoughts of re-opening it. He was slowly getting his ideas together to say that the lad should see how he got along with the school

before trying the choir, when he found the young lady's hand in his, and had to take care not to hurt it, whilst she rained thanks on him for the flowers.

" You're freely welcome, Miss," was what he did say after all.

In the evening, however, he was very moody, but Jack was dying of curiosity, and at last could contain himself no longer.

" What did Miss Jenny want, Daddy ? " he asked.

The old man looked very grim.

" First to mak' a fool of me, and i' t' second place to mak' a fool of thee," was his reply. And he added with pettish emphasis, " They're all alike, gentle and simple. Lad, lad ! if ye'd have any peace of your life never let a woman's foot across your threshold. Steek t' door of your house—if ye own one—and t' door o' your heart—if ye own one—and then ye'll never rue. Look at this coat ! "

And the old man went grumpily to bed, and dreamed that Miss Jenny had put her little foot over his threshold, and that he had shown her the secret panel, and let her take away his savings.

And Jack went to bed, and dreamed that he went to school, and showed himself to Phœbe Shaw in his Sunday suit.

This dainty little damsel had long been making havoc in Jack's heart. The attraction must have been one of contrast, for whereas Jack was black and grubby, and had only week-day clothes—which were ragged at that—Phœbe was fair, and exquisitely clean, and quite terribly tidy. Her mother was the neatest woman in the parish. It was she who was wont to say to her trembling handmaid, " I hope I can black a grate without blacking myself." But little Phœbe promised so far to out-do her mother, that it seemed doubtful if she could " black herself "

if she tried. Only the bloom of childhood could have resisted the polishing effects of yellow soap, as Phœbe's brow and cheeks did resist it. Her shining hair was compressed into a plait that would have done credit to a rope-maker. Her pinafores were speckless, and as to her white Whitsun frock—Jack could think of nothing the least like Phœbe in that, except a snowy fantail strutting about the dovecot roof; and, to say the truth, the likeness was most remarkable.

It has been shown that Jack March had a mind to be master of his fate, and he did succeed in making friends with little Phœbe Shaw. This was before Miss Jenny's visit, but the incident shall be recorded here.

Early on Sunday mornings it was Jack's custom to hide his work-day garb in an angle of the ivy-covered wall of the Dovecot garden, only letting his head appear over the top, from whence he watched to see Phœbe pass on her way to Sunday-school, and to bewilder himself with the sight of her starched frock, and her airs with her Bible and Prayer-book, and class-card, and clean pocket-handkerchief.

Now, amongst the rest of her Sunday paraphernalia, Phœbe always carried a posy, made up with herbs and some strong-smelling flowers. Country-women take mint and southernwood to a long hot service, as fine ladies take smelling-bottles (for it is a pleasant delusion with some writers that the weaker sex is a strong sex in the working-classes). And though Phœbe did not suffer from " fainty feels " like her mother, she and her little playmates took posies to Sunday-school, and refreshed their nerves in the steam of question and answer, and hair-oil and corduroy, with all the airs of their elders.

One day she lost her posy on her way to school,

and her loss was Jack's opportunity. He had been waiting half-an-hour among the ivy, when he saw her just below him, fuzzling round and round like a kitten chasing its tail. He sprang to the top of the wall.

"Have ye lost something?" he gasped.

"My posy," said poor Phœbe, lifting her sweet eyes, which were full of tears.

A second spring brought Jack into the dust at her feet, where he searched most faithfully, and was wandering along the path by which she had come, when she called him back.

"Never mind," said she. "They'll most likely be dusty by now."

Jack was not used to think the worse of anything for a coating of dust; but he paused, trying to solve the perpetual problem of his situation, and find out what the little maid really wanted.

"'Twas only Old Man and marygolds," said she. "They're common enough."

A light illumined Jack's understanding.

"We've Old Man i' plenty. Wait, and I'll get thee a fresh posy." And he began to re-climb the wall.

But Phœbe drew nearer. She stroked down her frock, and spoke mincingly but confidentially. "My mother says Daddy Darwin has red bergamot i' his garden. We've none i' ours. My mother always says there's nothing like red bergamot to take to church. She says it's a deal more refreshing than Old Man, and not so common. My mother says she's always meaning to ask Daddy Darwin to let us have a root to set; but she doesn't often see him, and when she does she doesn't think on. But she always says there's nothing like red bergamot, and my Aunt Nancy, she says the same."

"*Red* is it?" cried Jack. "You wait there,

love." And before Phœbe could say him nay, he was over the wall and back again with his arms full.

"Is it any o' this lot?" he inquired, dropping a small haycock of flowers at her feet.

"Don't ye know one from t' other?" asked Phœbe, with round eyes of reproach. And spreading her clean kerchief on the grass she laid her Bible and Prayer-book and class-card on it, and set vigorously and nattily to work, picking one flower and another from the fragrant confusion, nipping the stalks to even lengths, rejecting withered leaves, and instructing Jack as she proceeded.

"I suppose ye know a rose? That's a double velvet.[1] They dry sweeter than lavender for linen. These dark red things is pheasants' eyes; but, dear, dear, what a lad! ye've dragged it up by the roots! And eh! what will Master Darwin say when he misses these pink hollyhocks? And only in bud, too! *There's* red bergamot;[2] smell it!"

It had barely touched Jack's willing nose when it was hastily withdrawn. Phœbe had caught sight of Polly and Susan Smith coming to school, and crying that she should be late and must run, the little maid picked up her paraphernalia (not forgetting the red bergamot), and fled down the lane. And Jack, with equal haste, snatched up the tell-tale heap of flowers and threw them into a disused pig-sty, where it was unlikely that Daddy Darwin would go to look for his poor pink hollyhocks.

[1] Double Velvet, an old summer rose, not common now. It is described by Parkinson.

[2] Red Bergamot, or Twinflower: *Monarda Didyma.*



"PHŒBE SET VIGOROUSLY TO WORK."

(p. 72.)

BALMAIN TEACHERS' COLLEGE LIBRARY

SCENE VII

APRIL was a busy month in the Dovecot. Young birds were chipping the egg, parent birds were feeding their young or relieving each other on the nest, and Jack and his master were constantly occupied and excited.

One night Daddy Darwin went to bed; but, though he was tired, he did not sleep long. He had sold a couple of handsome but quarrelsome pigeons to advantage, and had added their price to the hoard in the bed-head. This had renewed his old fears, for the store was becoming very valuable; and he wondered if it had really escaped Jack's quick observation, or whether the boy knew about it, and, perhaps, talked about it. As he lay and worried himself he fancied he heard sounds without—the sound of footsteps and of voices. Then his heart beat till he could hear nothing else; then he could undoubtedly hear nothing at all; then he certainly heard something, which probably was rats. And so he lay in a cold sweat, and pulled the rug over his face, and made up his mind to give the money to the parson, for the poor, if he was spared till daylight.

He *was* spared till daylight, and had recovered himself, and settled to leave the money where it was, when Jack rushed in from the pigeon-house with a face of dire dismay. He made one or two futile efforts to speak, and then unconsciously used the words Shakespeare has put into the mouth of

Macduff, " All my pretty 'uns ! " and so burst into tears.

And when the old man made his way to the pigeon-house, followed by poor Jack, he found that the eggs were cold and the callow young shivering in deserted nests, and that every bird was gone. And then he remembered the robbers, and was maddened by the thought that whilst he lay expecting thieves to break in and steal his money he had let them get safely off with his whole stock of pigeons.

Daddy Darwin had never taken up arms against his troubles, and this one crushed him. The fame and beauty of his house-doves were all that was left of prosperity about the place, and now there was nothing left—*nothing !* Below this dreary thought lay a far more bitter one, which he dared not confide to Jack. He had heard the robbers ; he might have frightened them away ; he might at least have given the lad a chance to save his pets, and not a care had crossed his mind except for the safety of his own old bones, and of those miserable savings in the bed-head, which he was enduring so much to scrape together (oh satire !) for a distant connection whom he had never seen. He crept back to the kitchen, and dropped in a heap upon the settle, and muttered to himself. Then his thoughts wandered. Supposing the pigeons were gone for good, would he ever make up his mind to take that money out of the money-hole, and buy a fresh stock ? He knew he never would, and shrank into a meaner heap upon the settle as he said so to himself. He did not like to look his faithful lad in the face.

Jack looked him in the face, and, finding no help there, acted pretty promptly behind his back. He roused the parish constable, and fetched that

functionary to the Dovecot before he had had bite or sup to break his fast. He spread a meal for him and Daddy, and borrowed the Shaws' light cart whilst they were eating it. The Shaws were good farmer-folk, they sympathized most fully; and Jack was glad of a few words of pity from Phœbe. She said she had watched the pretty pets "many a score of times," which comforted more than one of Jack's heartstrings. Phœbe's mother paid respect to his sense and promptitude. He had acted exactly as she would have done.

"Daddy was right enough about yon lad," she admitted. "He's not one to let the grass grow under his feet."

And she gave him a good breakfast whilst the horse was being "put to." It pleased her that Jack jumped up and left half a delicious cold tea-cake behind him when the cart-wheels grated outside. Mrs. Shaw sent Phœbe to put the cake in his pocket, and "the Measter" helped Jack in and took the reins. He said he would "see Daddy Darwin through it," and added the weight of his opinion to that of the constable, that the pigeons had been taken to "a beastly low place" (as he put it) that had lately been set up for pigeon-shooting in the outskirts of the neighbouring town.

They paused no longer at the Dovecot than was needed to hustle Daddy Darwin on to the seat beside Master Shaw, and for Jack to fill his pockets with peas, and take his place beside the constable. He had certain ideas of his own on the matter, which were not confused by the jog-trot of the light cart, which did give a final jumble to poor Daddy Darwin's faculties.

No wonder they were jumbled! The terrors of the night past, the shock of the morning, the com-

pleteness of the loss, the piteous sight in the pigeon-house, remorseful shame, and then—after all these years, during which he had not gone half-a-mile from his own hearthstone—to be set up for all the world to see, on the front seat of a market-cart, back to back with the parish constable, and jogged off as if miles were nothing, and crowded streets were nothing, and the Beaulieu Gardens were nothing; Master Shaw talking away as easily as if they were sitting in two arm-chairs, and making no more of "stepping into" a lawyer's office, and "going on" to the Town Hall, than if he were talking of stepping up to his own bed-chamber or going out into the garden!

That day passed like a dream, and Daddy Darwin remembered what happened in it as one remembers visions of the night.

He had a vision (a very unpleasing vision) of the proprietor of the Beaulieu Gardens, a big greasy man, with sinister eyes very close together, and a hook nose, and a heavy watch-chain, and a bullying voice. He browbeat the constable very soon, and even bullied Master Shaw into silence. No help was to be had from him in his loud indignation at being supposed to traffic with thieves. When he turned the tables by talking of slander, loss of time, and compensation, Daddy Darwin smelt money, and tremblingly whispered to Master Shaw to apologize and get out of it. "They're gone for good," he almost sobbed; "gone for good, like all t' rest! And I'll not be long after 'em."

But even as he spoke he heard a sound which made him lift up his head. It was Jack's call at feeding-time to the pigeons at the Dovecot. And quick following on this most musical and most familiar sound there came another. The old man

put both his lean hands behind his ears to be sure that he heard it aright—the sound of wings—the wings of a dove!

The other men heard it and ran in. Whilst they were wrangling, Jack had slipped past them, and had made his way into a wired enclosure in front of the pigeon-house. And there they found him, with all the captive pigeons coming to his call; flying, fluttering, strutting, nestling from head to foot of him, he scattering peas like hail.

He was the first to speak, and not a choke in his voice. His iron temperament was at white heat, and, as he afterwards said, he "cared no more for yon dirty chap wi' the big nose, nor if he were a *ratten*[1] in a hayloft!"

"These is ours," he said, shortly. "I'll count 'em over, and see if they're right. There was only one young 'un that could fly. A white 'un." ("It's here," interpolated Master Shaw.) "I'll pack 'em i' yon," and Jack turned his thumb to a heap of hampers in a corner. "T' carrier can leave t' baskets at t' toll-bar next Saturday, and ye may send your lad for 'em, if ye keep one."

The proprietor of the Beaulieu Gardens was not a man easily abashed, but most of the pigeons were packed before he had fairly resumed his previous powers of speech. Then, as Master Shaw said, he talked "on the other side of his mouth." Most willing was he to help to bring to justice the scoundrels who had deceived him and robbed Mr. Darwin, but he feared they would be difficult to trace. His own feeling was that of wishing for pleasantness among neighbours. The pigeons had been found at the Gardens. That was enough. He would be glad to settle the business out of court.

[1] *Anglicè*, Rat.

Daddy Darwin heard the chink of the dirty man's money, and would have compounded the matter then and there. But not so the parish constable, who saw himself famous; and not so Jack, who turned eyes of smouldering fire on Master Shaw.

"Maester Shaw! you'll not let them chaps get off? Daddy's mazelin wi' trouble, sir, but I reckon you'll see to it."

"If it costs t' worth of the pigeons ten times over, I'll see to it, my lad," was Master Shaw's reply. And the parish constable rose even to a vein of satire as he avenged himself of the man who had slighted his office. "Settle it out of court? Aye! I dare say. And send t' same chaps to fetch 'em away again t' night after. Nay—bear a hand with this hamper, Maester Shaw, if you please—if it's all t' same to you, Mr. Proprietor, I think we shall have to trouble you to step up to t' Town Hall by and by, and see if we can't get shut of them mistaking friends o' yours for three month any way."

If that day was a trying one to Daddy Darwin, the night that followed it was far worse. The thieves were known to the police, and the case was down to come on at the Town Hall the following morning; but meanwhile the constable thought fit to keep the pigeons under his own charge in the village lock-up. Jack refused to be parted from his birds, and remained with them, leaving Daddy Darwin alone in the Dovecot. He dared not go to bed, and it was not a pleasant night that he spent, dozing with weariness, and starting up with fright, in an arm-chair facing the money-hole.

Some things that he had been nervous about he got quite used to, however. He bore himself with sufficient dignity in the publicity of the Town Hall, where a great sensation was created by the pigeons

being let loose without, and coming to Jack's call. Some of them fed from the boy's lips, and he was the hero of the hour, to Daddy Darwin's delight.

Then the lawyer and the lawyer's office proved genial and comfortable to him. He liked civil ways and smooth speech, and understood them far better than Master Shaw's brevity and uncouthness. The lawyer chatted kindly and intelligently; he gave Daddy Darwin wine and biscuit, and talked of the long standing of the Darwin family and its vicissitudes; he even took down some fat yellow books, and showed the old man how many curious laws had been made from time to time for the special protection of pigeons and dovecots. Very ancient statutes making the killing of a house-dove felony. Then 1 James I. c. 29, awarded three months' imprisonment " without bail or mainprise " to any person who should " shoot at, kill, or destroy with any gun, crossbow, stonebow, or longbow, any house-dove or pigeon," but allowed an alternative fine of twenty shillings to be paid to the churchwardens of the parish for the benefit of the poor. Daddy Darwin hoped there was no such alternative in this case, and it proved that by 2 Geo. III. c. 29, the twenty-shilling fine was transferred to the owner of birds; at which point another client called, and the polite lawyer left Daddy to study the laws by himself.

It was when Jack was helping Master Shaw to put the horse into the cart, after the trial was over, that the farmer said to him, " I don't want to put you about, my lad, but I'm afraid you won't keep your master long. T' old gentleman's breaking up, mark my words! Constable and me was going into the *George* for a glass, and Master Darwin left us and went back to the office. I says, ' What

are ye going back to t' lawyer for? ' and he says, ' I don't mind telling you, Master Shaw, but it's to make my will.' And off he goes. Now, there's only two more things between that and death, Jack March ! And one's the parson, and t' other's the doctor."

SCENE VIII

LITTLE Phœbe Shaw coming out of the day-school, and picking her way home to tea, was startled by folk running past her, and by a sound of cheering from the far end of the village, which gradually increased in volume, and was caught up by the bystanders as they ran. When Phœbe heard that it was "Constable, and Master Shaw, and Daddy Darwin and his lad, coming home, and the pigeons along wi' 'em," she felt inclined to run too; but a fit of shyness came over her, and she demurely decided to wait by the school-gate till they came her way. They did not come. They stopped. What were they doing? Another bystander explained, "They're shaking hands wi' Daddy, and I reckon they're making him put up t' birds here, to see 'em go home to t' Dovecot."

Phœbe ran as if for her life. She loved beast and bird as well as Jack himself, and the fame of Daddy Darwin's doves was great. To see them put up by him to fly home after such an adventure was a sight not lightly to be foregone. The crowd had moved to a hillock in a neighbouring field before she touched its outskirts. By that time it pretty well numbered the population of the village, from the oldest inhabitant to the youngest that could run. Phœbe had her mother's courage and resource. Chirping out feebly but clearly, "I'm Maester Shaw's little lass, will ye let me through?" she was passed from

hand to hand, till her little fingers found themselves in Jack's tight clasp, and he fairly lifted her to her father's side.

She was just in time. Some of the birds had hung about Jack, nervous, or expecting peas; but the hesitation was past. Free in the sweet sunshine—beating down the evening air with silver wings and their feathers like gold—ignorant of cold eggs and callow young dead in deserted nests—sped on their way by such a roar as rarely shook the village in its body corporate—they flew straight home:—to Daddy Darwin's Dovecot.

SCENE IX

DADDY DARWIN lived a good many years after making his will, and the Dovecot prospered in his hands. It would be more just to say that it prospered in the hands of Jack March. By hook and by crook he increased the live stock about the place. Folk were kind to one who had set so excellent an example to other farm lads, though he lacked the primal virtue of belonging to the neighbourhood. He bartered pigeons for fowls, and some one gave him a sitting of eggs to "see what he would make of 'em." Master Shaw gave him a little pig, with kind words and good counsel; and Jack cleaned out the disused pig-styes, which were never disused again. He scrubbed his pigs with soap and water as if they had been Christians, and the admirable animals, regardless of the pork they were coming to, did him infinite credit, and brought him profit into the bargain, which he spent on ducks' eggs, and other additions to his farmyard family.

The Shaws were very kind to him; and if Mrs. Shaw's secret must be told, it was because Phœbe was so unchangeably and increasingly kind to him, that she sent the pretty maid (who had a knack of knowing her own mind about things) to service.

Jack March was a handsome, stalwart youth now, of irreproachable conduct, and with qualities which Mrs. Shaw particularly prized; but he was but a farm-lad, and no match for her daughter.

Jack only saw his sweetheart once during several

years. She had not been well, and was at home for the benefit of "native air." He walked over the hill with her as they returned from church, and lived on the remembrance of that walk for two or three years more. Phœbe had given him her Prayer-book to carry, and he had found a dead flower in it, and had been jealous. She had asked if he knew what it was, and he had replied fiercely that he did not, and was not sure that he cared to know.

"Ye never did know much about flowers," said Phœbe, demurely. "It's red bergamot."

"I love—red bergamot," he whispered penitently. "And thou owes me a bit. I gave thee some once." And Phœbe had let him put the withered bits into his own hymn-book, which was more than he deserved.

Jack was still in the choir, and taught in the Sunday-school where he used to learn. The parson's daughter had had her way; Daddy Darwin grumbled at first, but in the end he got a bottle-green Sunday-coat out of the oak press that matched the bedstead, and put the house-key into his pocket, and went to church too. Now, for years past he had not failed to take his place, week by week, in the pew that was traditionally appropriated to the use of the Darwins of Dovecot. In such an hour the sordid cares of the secret panel weighed less heavily on his soul, and the things that are not seen came nearer—the house not made with hands, the treasures that rust and moth corrupt not, and which thieves do not break through to steal.

Daddy Darwin died of old age. As his health failed, Jack nursed him with the tenderness of a woman; and kind inquiries, and dainties which Jack could not have cooked, came in from many

quarters where it pleased the old man to find that he was held in respect and remembrance.

One afternoon, coming in from the farmyard, Jack found him sitting by the kitchen-table as he had left him, but with a dread look of change upon his face. At first he feared there had been "a stroke," but Daddy Darwin's mind was clear and his voice firmer than usual.

"My lad," he said, "fetch me yon tea-pot out of the corner cupboard. T' one wi' a pole-house [1] painted on it, and some letters. Take care how ye shift it. It were t' merry feast-pot [2] at my christening, and yon's t' letters of my father's and mother's names. Take off t' lid. There's two bits of paper in the inside."

Jack did as he was bid, and laid the papers (one small and yellow with age, the other bigger, and blue, and neatly written upon) at his master's right hand.

"Read yon," said the old man, pushing the small one towards him. Jack took it up wondering. It was the letter he had written from the workhouse fifteen years before. That was all he could see. The past surged up too thickly before his eyes, and tossing it impetuously from him, he dropped on a chair by the table, and snatching Daddy Darwin's hands he held them to his face with tears.

"GOD bless thee!" he sobbed. "You've been a good maester to me!"

"*Daddy*," wheezed the old man. "*Daddy*, not maester." And drawing his right hand away, he laid it solemnly on the young man's head. "GOD bless *thee*, and reward thee. What have I done i'

[1] A *pole-house* is a small dovecot on the top of a pole.

[2] "Merry feast-pot" is a name given to old pieces of ware, made in local potteries for local festivals.

my feckless life to deserve a son? But if ever a lad earned a father and a home, thou hast earned 'em, Jack March."

He moved his hand again and laid it trembling on the paper.

"Every word i' this letter ye've made good. Every word, even to t' bit at the end. 'I love them Tumblers as if they were my own,' says you. Lift thee head, lad, and look at me. *They are thy own!* . . . Yon blue paper's my last will and testament, made many a year back by Mr. Brown, of Green Street, Solicitor, and a very nice gentleman too; and witnessed by his clerks, two decent young chaps, and civil enough, but with too much watch-chain for their situation. Jack March, my son, I have left thee maester of Dovecot and all that I have. And there's a bit of money in t' bed-head that'll help thee to make a fair start, and to bury me decently atop of my father and mother. Ye may let Bill Sexton toll an hour-bell for me, for I'm a old standard, if I never were good for much. Maybe I might ha' done better if things had happed in a different fashion; but the Lord knows all. I'd like a hymn at the grave, Jack, if the Vicar has no objections, and do thou sing if thee can. Don't fret, my son, thou'st no cause. 'Twas that sweet voice o' thine took me back again to public worship, and it's not t' least of all I owe thee, Jack March. A poor reason, lad, for taking up with a neglected duty—a poor reason—but the Lord is a GOD of mercy, or there'd be small chance for most on us. If Miss Jenny and her husband come to t' Vicarage this summer, say I left her my duty and an old man's blessing; and if she wants any roots out of t' garden, give 'em her, and give her yon old chest that stands in the back chamber. It belonged to

an uncle of my mother's—a Derbyshire man. They say her husband's a rich gentleman, and treats her very well. I reckon she may have what she's a mind, new and polished, but she's always for old lumber. They're a whimsical lot, gentle and simple. And talking of *women*, Jack, I've a word to say, if I can fetch my breath to say it. Lad! as sure as you're maester of Dovecot, you'll give it a missus. Now take heed to me. If ye fetch any woman home here but Phœbe Shaw, I'll *walk*, and scare ye away from t' old place. I'm willing for Phœbe, and I charge ye to tell the lass so hereafter. And tell her it's not because she's fair—too many on 'em are that; and not because she's thrifty and house-proud—her mother's that, and she's no favourite of mine; but because I've watched her whenever t' ould cat 's let her be at home, and it's my belief that she loves ye, knowing nought of *this*" (he laid his hand upon the will), "and that she'll stick to ye, choose what her folk may say. Aye, aye, she's not one of t' sort that quits a falling house—*like rattens*."

Language fails to convey the bitterness which the old man put into these last two words. It exhausted him, and his mind wandered. When he had to some extent recovered himself he spoke again, but very feebly.

"Tak' my duty to the Vicar, lad, Daddy Darwin's duty, and say he's at t' last feather of the shuttle, and would be thankful for the Sacrament."

* * * * *

The Parson had come and gone. Daddy Darwin did not care to lie down, he breathed with difficulty; so Jack made him easy in a big arm-chair, and raked up the fire with cinders, and took a chair on the other side of the hearth to watch with him. The

old man slept comfortably, and at last, much wearied, the young man dozed also.

He awoke because Daddy Darwin moved, but for a moment he thought he must be dreaming. So erect the old man stood, and with such delight in his wide-open eyes. They were looking over Jack's head.

All that the lad had never seen upon his face seemed to have come back to it—youth, hope, resolution, tenderness. His lips were trembling with the smile of acutest joy.

Suddenly he stretched out his arms, and crying, "Alice!" started forward and fell—dead—on the breast of his adopted son.

Craw! Craw! Craw! The crows flapped slowly home, and the Gaffers moved off too. The sun was down, and "damps" are bad for "rheumatics."

"It's a strange tale," said Gaffer II., "but if all's true ye tell me, there's not too many like him."

"That's right enough," Gaffer I. admitted. "He's been t' same all through, and ye should ha' seen the burying he gave t' ould chap. He was rare and good to him by all accounts, and never gainsaid him ought, except i' not lifting his voice as he should ha' done at t' grave. Jack sings a bass solo as well as any man i' t' place; but he stood yonder, for all t' world like one of them crows, black o' visage, and black wi' funeral clothes, and choked with crying like a child i'stead of a man."

"Well, well, t' ould chap were all he had, I reckon," said Gaffer II.

"*That's* right enough; and for going backwards, as ye may say, and setting a wild graff on an old standard, yon will's done well for DADDY DARWIN'S DOVECOT."

THE STORY OF A SHORT LIFE



" But the fair guerdon when we hope to find,
And think to burst out into sudden blaze,
Comes the blind Fury with the abhoréd shears
And slits the thin spun life,—' But not the praise.' "

MILTON.

" It is a calumny on men to say that they are roused to heroic action by ease, hope of pleasure, recompense,—sugar-plums of any kind in this world or the next! In the meanest mortal there lies something nobler Difficulty, abnegation, martyrdom, death are the *allurements* that act on the heart of man. Kindle the inner genial life of him, you have a flame that burns up all lower considerations Not by flattering our appetites; no, by awakening the Heroic that slumbers in every heart——. . ."—CARLYLE.

CHAPTER I

" Arma virumque cano."—*Æneid.*

" Man—and the horseradish—are most biting when grated."
JEAN PAUL RICHTER.

" MOST annoying ! " said the Master of the House. His thick eyebrows were puckered just then with the vexation of his thoughts; but the lines of annoyance on his forehead were to some extent fixed lines. They helped to make him look older than his age—he was not forty—and they gathered into a fierce frown as his elbow was softly touched by his little son.

The child was defiantly like his father, even to a knitted brow, for his whole face was crumpled with the vigour of some resolve which he found it hard to keep, and which was symbolized by his holding the little red tip of his tongue betwixt finger and thumb.

" Put your hands down, Leonard ! Put your tongue in, sir ! What are you after ? What do you want ? What are you doing here ? Be off to the nursery, and tell Jemima to keep you there. Your mother and I are busy."

Far behind the boy, on the wall, hung the portrait of one of his ancestors—a youth of sixteen. The painting was by Vandyck, and it was the most valuable of the many valuable things that strewed and decorated the room. A very perfect example of the great master's work, and uninjured by Time. The young Cavalier's face was more interesting than

handsome, but so eager and refined that, set off as it was by pale-hued satin and falling hair, he might have been called effeminate, if his brief life, which ended on the field of Naseby, had not done more than common to prove his manhood. A coat-of-arms, blazoned in the corner of the painting, had some appearance of having been added later. Below this was rudely inscribed, in yellow paint, the motto which also decorated the elaborate stone mantelpiece opposite—*Lætus sorte mea.*

Leonard was very fond of that picture. It was known to his childish affections as "Uncle Rupert." He constantly wished that he could get into the frame and play with the dog—the dog with the upturned face and melancholy eyes, and odd resemblance to a long-haired Cavalier—on whose faithful head Uncle Rupert's slender fingers perpetually reposed.

Though not able to play with the dog, Leonard did play with Uncle Rupert—the game of trying to get out of the reach of his eyes.

"I play 'Puss-in-the-corner' with him," the child was wont to explain; "but whichever corner I get into, his eyes come after me. The dog looks at Uncle Rupert always, and Uncle Rupert always looks at me."

. . . . "To see if you are growing up a good boy and a gallant young gentleman, such as he was." So Leonard's parents and guardians explained the matter to him, and he devoutly believed them.

Many an older and less credulous spectator stood in the light of those painted eyes, and acknowledged their spell. Very marvellous was the cunning which, by dabs and streaks of colour, had kept the spirit of this long dead youth to gaze at his descendants from a sheet of canvas and stir the sympathy of strangers,

parted by more than two centuries from his sorrows, with the mock melancholy of painted tears. For whether the painter had just overdone some trick of representing their liquidness, or whether the boy's eyes had brimmed over as he was standing for his portrait (his father and elder brother had died in the civil war before him), there remains no tradition to tell. But Vandyck never painted a portrait fuller of sad dignity, even in those troubled times.

Happily for his elders, Leonard invented for himself a reason for the obvious tears.

"I believe Uncle Rupert knew that they were going to chop the poor king's head off, and that's why he looks as if he were going to cry."

It was partly because the child himself looked as if he were going to cry—and that not fractiously, but despite a struggle with himself—that, as he stood before the Master of the House, he might have been that other master of the same house come to life again at six years of age. His long, fair hair, the pliable, nervous fingers, which he had put down as he was bid, the strenuous tension of his little figure under a sense of injustice, and, above all, his beautiful eyes, in which the tears now brimmed over the eyelashes as the waters of a lake well up through the reeds that fringe its banks. He was very very like Uncle Rupert when he turned those eyes on his mother in mute reproach.

Lady Jane came to his defence.

"I think Leonard meant to be good. I made him promise me to try and cure himself of the habit of speaking to you when you are speaking to some one else. But, dear Leonard" (and she took the hand that had touched his father's elbow), "I don't think you were quite on honour when you interrupted Father with this hand, though you

were holding your tongue with the other. That is what we call keeping a promise to the ear and breaking it to the sense."

All the Cavalier dignity came unstarched in Leonard's figure. With a red face, he answered bluntly, "I'm very sorry. I meant to keep my promise."

"Next time keep it *well*, as a gentleman should. Now, what do you want?"

"Pencil and paper, please."

"There they are. Take them to the nursery, as Father told you."

Leonard looked at his father. He had not been spoilt for six years by an irritable and indulgent parent without learning those arts of diplomacy in which children quickly become experts.

"Oh, he can stay," said the Master of the House, "and he may say a word now and then, if he doesn't talk too much. Boys can't sit mumchance always—can they, Len? There; kiss your poor old father, and get away, and keep quiet."

Lady Jane made one of many fruitless efforts on behalf of discipline.

"I think, dear, as you told him to go, he had better go now."

"He *will* go, pretty sharp, if he isn't good. Now, for pity's sake, let's talk out this affair, and let me get back to my work."

"Have you been writing poetry this morning, Father dear?" Leonard inquired, urbanely.

He was now lolling against a writing-table of the First Empire, where sheets of paper lay like fallen leaves among Japanese bronzes, old and elaborate candlesticks, grotesque letter-clips and paper-weights, quaint pottery, big seals, and spring flowers in slender Venetian glasses of many colours.

"I wrote three lines, and was interrupted four times," replied his sire, with bitter brevity.

"I think *I'll* write some poetry. I don't mind being interrupted. May I have your ink?"

"No, you may *not!*" roared the Master of the House and of the inkpot of priceless china which Leonard had seized. "Now, be off to the nursery!"

"I won't touch anything. I am going to draw out of the window," said Leonard, calmly.

He had practised the art of being troublesome to the verge of expulsion ever since he had had a whim of his own, and as skilfully as he played other games. He was seated among the cushions of the oriel window-seat (coloured rays from coats-of-arms in the upper panes falling on his fair hair with a fanciful effect of canonizing him for his sudden goodness) almost before his father could reply.

"I advise you to stay there, and to keep quiet." Lady Jane took up the broken thread of conversation in despair.

"Have you ever seen him?"

"Yes; years ago."

"You know I never saw either. Your sister was much older than you; wasn't she?"

"*The shadows move so on the grass, and the elms have so many branches, I think I shall turn round and draw the fire-place,*" *murmured Leonard.*

"Ten years. You may be sure, if I had been grown up I should never have allowed the marriage. I cannot think what possessed my father——"

"*I am doing the inscription! I can print Old English. What does L. diphthong Æ. T. U. S. mean?*" *said Leonard.*

"*It means joyful, contented, happy.*—I was at Eton at the time. Disastrous ill-luck!"

"Are there any children?"

"One son. And to crown all, *his* regiment is at Asholt. Nice family party!"

"A young man! Has he been well brought up?"

"*What does*——"

"*Will you hold your tongue, Leonard?*—Is he likely to have been well brought up? However, he's 'in the Service,' as they say. I wish it didn't make one think of flunkeys, what with the word service, and the liveries (I mean uniforms), and the legs, and shoulders, and swagger, and tag-rags, and epaulettes, and the fatiguing alertness and attentiveness of 'men in the Service.'"

The Master of the House spoke with the pettish accent of one who says what he does not mean, partly for lack of something better to do, and partly to avenge some inward vexation upon his hearers. He lounged languidly on a couch, but Lady Jane sat upright, and her eyes gave an unwonted flash. She came of an ancient Scottish race, that had shed its blood like water on many a battle-field, generations before the family of her English husband had become favourites at the Court of the Tudors.

"I have so many military belongings, both in the past and the present, that I have a respect for the Service——"

He got up, and patted her head, and smiled.

"I beg your pardon, my child. *Et ego*——" and he looked at Uncle Rupert, who looked sadly back again; "but you must make allowances for me. Asholt Camp has been a thorn in my side from the first. And now to have the barrack-master, and the youngest subaltern of a marching regiment——"

"He's our nephew, Rupert!"

"Mine—not yours. You've nothing to do with him, thank goodness."

"Your people are my people. Now do not worry

yourself. *Of course* I shall call on your sister at once. Will they be here for some time?"

"Five years, you may depend. He's just the sort of man to wedge himself into a snug berth at Asholt. You're an angel, Jane; you always are. But fighting ancestors are one thing, a barrack-master brother-in-law is another."

"Has he done any fighting?"

"Oh dear, yes! Be-medalled like that Guy Fawkes General in the pawnbroker's window, that Len was so charmed by. But, my dear, I assure you——"

"*I only just want to know what S. O. R. T. E. M. E. A. means,*" *Leonard hastily broke in.* "*I've done it all now, and shan't want to know anything more.*"

"*Sorte mea is Latin for 'My fate,' or 'My lot in life.' Lætus sorte mea means 'Happy in my lot.' It is our family motto. Now, if you ask another question, off you go!*—After all, Jane, you must allow it's about as hard lines as could be, to have a few ancestral acres and a nice old place in one of the quietest, quaintest corners of Old England; and for Government to come and plant a Camp of Instruction, as they call it, and pour in tribes of savages in war-paint to build wigwams within a couple of miles of your lodge-gates!"

She laughed heartily.

"Dear Rupert! You *are* a born poet! You do magnify your woes so grandly. What was the brother-in-law like when you saw him?"

"Oh, the regular type. Hair cut like a pauper, or a convict" (the Master of the House tossed his own locks as he spoke), "big, swaggering sort of fellow, swallowed the poker and not digested it, rather good features, acclimatized complexion, tight fit of hot-red cloth, and general pipeclay."

"*Then he must be the Sapper!*" Leonard announced, as he advanced with a firm step and kindling eyes from the window. "Jemima's *other* brother is a Gunner. *He* dresses in blue. But they both pipeclay their gloves, and I pipeclayed mine this morning, when she did the hearth. You've no idea how nasty they look whilst it's wet, but they dry as white as snow, only mine fell among the cinders. The Sapper is very kind, both to her and to me. He gave her a brooch, and he is making me a wooden fort to put my cannon in. But the Gunner is such a funny man! I said to him, 'Gunner! why do you wear white gloves?' and he said, 'Young gentleman, why does a miller wear a white hat?' He's very funny. But I think I like the tidy one best of all. He is so very beautiful, and I should think he must be very brave."

That Leonard was permitted to deliver himself of this speech without a check can only have been due to the paralyzing nature of the shock which it inflicted on his parents, and of which he himself was pleasantly unconscious. His whole soul was in the subject, and he spoke with a certain grace and directness of address, and with a clear and facile enunciation, which were among the child's most conspicuous marks of good breeding.

"This is nice!" said the Master of the House between his teeth, with a deepened scowl.

The air felt stormy, and Leonard began to coax. He laid his curls against his father's arm, and asked, "Did you ever see a *tidy one*, Father dear? He *is* a very splendid sort of man."

"What nonsense are you talking? What do you mean by a *tidy one?*"

There was no mistake about the storm now; and

Leonard began to feel helpless, and, as usual in such circumstances, turned to Lady Jane.

"Mother told me!" he gasped.

The Master of the House also turned to Lady Jane.

"Do you mean you have heard of this before?"

She shook her head, and he seized his son by the shoulder.

"If that woman has taught you to tell untruths——"

Lady Jane firmly interposed.

"Leonard never tells untruths, Rupert. Please don't frighten him into doing so. Now, Leonard, don't be foolish and cowardly. Tell Mother quite bravely all about it. Perhaps she has forgotten."

The child was naturally brave; but the elements of excitement and uncertainty in his up-bringing were producing their natural results in a nervous and unequable temperament. It is not the least serious of the evils of being "spoilt," though, perhaps, the most seldom recognized. Many a fond parent justly fears to overdo "lessons," who is surprisingly blind to the brain-fag that comes from the strain to live at grown-up people's level; and to the nervous exhaustion produced in children, no less than in their elders, by indulged restlessness, discontent, and craving for fresh excitement, and for want of that sense of power and repose which comes with habitual obedience to righteous rules and regulations. Laws that can be set at nought are among the most demoralizing of influences which can curse a nation; and their effects are hardly less disastrous in the nursery. Moreover, an uncertain discipline is apt to take even the spoilt by surprise; and as Leonard seldom fully understood the checks he did receive, they unnerved him. He was unnerved now; and, even with his hand in that of his

mother, he stammered over his story with ill-repressed sobs and much mental confusion.

"W—we met him out walking. I m—mean we were out walking. He was out riding. He looked like a picture in my t—t—tales from Froissart. He had a very curious kind of helmet—n—not quite a helmet, and a beautiful green feather—at least, n—not exactly a feather, and a beautiful red waistcoat, only n—not a real waistcoat, b—but——"

"Send him to bed!" roared the Master of the House. "Don't let him prevaricate any more!"

"No, Rupert, please! I wish him to try and give a straight account. Now, Leonard, don't be a baby; but go on and tell the truth, like a brave boy."

Leonard desperately proceeded, sniffing as he did so.

"He c—carried a spear, like an old warrior. He truthfully did. On my honour! One end was on the tip of his foot, and there was a flag at the other end—a real fluttering pennon—there truthfully was! He does poke with his spear in battle, I do believe; but he didn't poke us. He was b—b—beautiful to b—b—be—hold! I asked Jemima, 'Is he another brother, for you do have such very nice brothers?' and she said, 'No, he's——'"

"*Hang* Jemima!" said the Master of the House. "Now listen to me. You said your mother told you. *What* did she tell you?"

"Je—Je—Jemima said, 'No, he's a 'Orderly;' and asked the way—I qu—quite forget where to—I truthfully do. And next morning I asked Mother what does Orderly mean? And she said *tidy*. So I call him the tidy one. Dear Mother, you truthfully did—at least," added Leonard chivalrously, as Lady Jane's face gave no response, "at least, if you've forgotten, never mind: it's my fault."

But Lady Jane's face was blank because she was trying not to laugh. The Master of the House did not try long. He bit his lip, and then burst into a peal.

"Better say no more to him," murmured Lady Jane. "I'll see Jemima now, if he may stay with you."

He nodded, and throwing himself back on the couch, held out his arms to the child.

"Well, that'll do. Put these men out of your head, and let me see your drawing."

Leonard stretched his faculties, and perceived that the storm was overpast. He clambered on to his father's knee, and their heads were soon bent lovingly together over the much-smudged sheet of paper, on which the motto from the chimneypiece was irregularly traced.

"You should have copied it from Uncle Rupert's picture. It is in plain letters there."

Leonard made no reply. His head now lay back on his father's shoulder, and his eyes were fixed on the ceiling, which was of Elizabethan date, with fantastic flowers in raised plaster-work. But Leonard did not see them at that moment. His vision was really turned inwards. Presently he said, "I am trying to think. Don't interrupt me, Father, if you please."

The Master of the House smiled, and gazed complacently at the face beside him. No painting, no china in his possession, was more beautiful. Suddenly the boy jumped down and stood alone, with his hands behind his back, and his eyes tightly shut.

"I am thinking very hard, Father. Please tell me again what our motto means."

"'*Lætus sorte mea*,—Happy in my lot.' What *are* you puzzling your little brains about?"

" Because I know I know something so like it, and I can't think what! Yes—no! Wait a minute! I've just got it! Yes, I remember now: it was my Wednesday text!"

He opened wide shining eyes, and clapped his hands, and his clear voice rang with the added note of triumph, as he cried, " ' The *lot* is fallen unto me in a fair ground. Yea, I have a goodly heritage.' "

The Master of the House held out his arms without speaking; but when Leonard had climbed back into them, he stroked the child's hair slowly, and said, " Is that your Wednesday text? "

" Last Wednesday's. I learn a text every day. Jemima sets them. She says her grandmother made her learn texts when she was a little girl. Now, Father dear, I'll tell you what I wish you would do; and I want you to do it at once—this very minute."

" That is generally the date of your desires. What is it? "

" I don't know what you are talking about, but I know what I want. Now you and I are all alone to our very selves, I want you to come to the organ, and put that text to music like the anthem you made out of those texts Mother chose for you, for the harvest festival. I'll tell you the words, for fear you don't quite remember them, and I'll blow the bellows. You may play on all-fours with both your feet and hands; you may pull out trumpet handle; you may make as much noise as ever you like—you'll see how I'll blow! "

* * * * *

Satisfied by the sounds of music that the two were happy, Lady Jane was in no haste to go back to the library; but when she did return, Leonard greeted her warmly.

He was pumping at the bellows handle of the

chamber-organ, before which sat the Master of the House, not a ruffle on his brow, playing with "all fours," and singing as he played.

Leonard's cheeks were flushed, and he cried impatiently—

"Mother! Mother dear! I've been wanting you ever so long! Father has set my text to music, and I want you to hear it; but I want to sit by him and sing too. So you must come and blow."

"Nonsense, Leonard! Your mother must do nothing of the sort. Jane! Listen to this!—*In a fa—air grou—nd.* Bit of pure melody, that, eh? The land flowing with milk and honey seems to stretch before one's eyes——"

"No! Father, that *is* unfair. You are not to tell her bits in the middle. Begin at the beginning, and—Mother dear, will you blow, and let me sing?"

"Certainly. Yes, Rupert, please. I've done it before; and my back isn't aching to-day. Do let me!"

"Yes, do let her," said Leonard, conclusively; and he swung himself up into the seat beside his father without more ado.

"Now, Father, begin! Mother, listen! And when it comes to '*Yea*,' and I pull trumpet handle out, blow as hard as ever you can. This first bit—when he only plays—is very gentle, and quite easy to blow."

Deep breathing of the organ filled a brief silence, then a prelude stole about the room. Leonard's eyes devoured his father's face, and the Master of the House looking down on him, with the double complacency of father and composer, began to sing:

"The lot—the lot is fallen un-to me;" and, his

mouth wide-parted with smiles, Leonard sang also : " The lot—the lot is fallen—fallen un-to me."

" In a fa—air grou—nd."

" Yea ! " (" Now, Mother dear, blow ! and fancy you hear trumpets ! ")

" *Yea !* YEA ! I have a good-ly Her—i—tage ! "

And after Lady Jane had ceased to blow, and the musician to make music, Leonard still danced and sang wildly about the room.

" Isn't it splendid, Mother ? Father and I made it together out of my Wednesday text. Uncle Rupert, can *you* hear it ? I don't think you can. I believe you are dead and deaf, though you seem to see."

And standing face to face with the young Cavalier, Leonard sang his Wednesday text all through !

" The lot is fallen unto me in a fair ground ; yea, I have a goodly heritage."

But Uncle Rupert spoke no word to his young kinsman, though he still " seemed to see " through eyes drowned in tears.

CHAPTER II

——"an acre of barren ground; ling, heath, broom, furze, anything."—*Tempest*, Act I. Scene i.

"Sound, sound the clarion, fill the fife!
To all the sensual world proclaim,
One crowded hour of glorious life
Is worth an age without a name."

SCOTT.

TAKE a Highwayman's Heath.

Destroy every vestige of life with fire and axe, from the pine that has longest been a landmark, to the smallest beetle smothered in smoking moss.

Burn acres of purple and pink heather, and pare away the young bracken that springs verdant from its ashes.

Let flame consume the perfumed gorse in all its glory, and not spare the broom, whose more exquisite yellow atones for its lack of fragrance.

In this common ruin be every lesser flower involved: blue beds of speedwell by the wayfarer's path—the daintier milkwort, and rougher red rattle—down to the very dodder that clasps the heather, let them perish, and the face of Dame Nature be utterly blackened! Then:

Shave the heath as bare as the back of your hand, and if you have felled every tree, and left not so much as a tussock of grass or a scarlet toadstool to break the force of the winds; then shall the winds come, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south, and shall raise on your

shaven heath clouds of sand that would not discredit a desert in the heart of Africa.

By some such recipe the ground was prepared for that Camp of Instruction at Asholt, which was, as we have seen, a thorn in the side of at least one of its neighbours. Then a due portion of this sandy oasis in a wilderness of beauty was mapped out into lines, with military precision, and on these were built rows of little wooden huts, which were painted a neat and useful black.

The huts for married men and officers were of varying degrees of comfort and homeliness, but those for single men were like toy-boxes of wooden soldiers; it was only by doing it very tidily that you could (so to speak) put your pretty soldiers away at night when you had done playing with them, and get the lid to shut down.

But then tidiness is a virtue which—like patience—is its own reward. And nineteen men who keep themselves clean and their belongings cleaner; who have made their nineteen beds into easy-chairs before most people have got out of bed at all; whose tin pails are kept as bright as average teaspoons (to the envy of housewives and the shame of housemaids!); who establish a common and a holiday side to the reversible top of their one long table, and scrupulously scrub both; who have a place for everything and a discipline which obliges everybody to put everything in its place;—nineteen men, I say, with such habits, find more comfort and elbow-room in a hut than an outsider might believe possible, and hang up a photograph or two into the bargain.

But it may be at once conceded to the credit of the Camp, that those who lived there thought better of it than those who did not, and that those who lived there longest were apt to like it best of all.

It was, however, regarded by different people from very opposite points of view, in each of which was some truth.

There were those to whom the place and the life were alike hateful.

They said that, from a soldier's standpoint, the life was one of exceptionally hard work, and uncertain stay, with no small proportion of the hardships and even risks of active service, and none of the more glorious chances of war.

That you might die of sunstroke on the march, or contract rheumatism, fever, or dysentery under canvas, without drawing Indian pay and allowances; and that you might ruin your uniform as rapidly as in a campaign, and never hope to pin a ribbon over its inglorious stains.

That the military society was too large to find friends quickly in the neighbourhood, and that as to your neighbours in camp, they were sure to get marching orders just when you had learnt to like them. And if you did *not* like them—! (But for that matter, quarrelsome neighbours are much the same everywhere. And a boundary road between two estates will furnish as pretty a feud as the pump of a common back-yard.)

The haters of the Camp said that it had every characteristic to disqualify it for a home; that it was ugly and crowded without the appliances of civilization; that it was neither town nor country, and had the disadvantages of each without the merits of either.

That it was unshaded and unsheltered, that the lines were monotonous and yet confusing, and every road and parade-ground more dusty than another.

That the huts let in the frost in winter and the

heat in summer, and were at once stuffy and draughty.

That the low roofs were like a weight upon your head, and that the torture was invariably brought to a climax on the hottest of the dog-days, when they were tarred and sanded in spite of your teeth; a process which did not insure their being water-tight or snow-proof when the weather changed.

That the rooms had no cupboards, but an unusual number of doors, through which no tall man could pass without stooping.

That only the publicity and squalor of the back-premises of the "Lines"—their drying clothes, and crumbling mud walls, their coal-boxes and slop-pails—could exceed the depressing effects of the gardens in front, where such plants as were not uprooted by the winds perished of frost or drought, and where, if some gallant creeper had stood fast and covered the nakedness of your wooden hovel, the Royal Engineers would arrive one morning, with as little announcement as the tar and sand men, and tear down the growth of years before you had finished shaving, for the purpose of repainting your outer walls.

On the other hand, there were those who had a great affection for Asholt, and affection never lacks arguments.

Admitting some hardships and blunders, the defenders of the Camp fell back successfully upon statistics for a witness to the general good health.

They said that if the Camp was windy the breezes were exquisitely bracing, and the climate of that particular part of England such as would qualify it for a health-resort for invalids, were it only situated in a comparatively inaccessible part of the Pyrenees, instead of being within an hour or two of London.

That this fact of being within easy reach of town

made the Camp practically at the head-quarters of civilization and refinement, whilst the simple and sociable ways of living, necessitated by hut-life in common, emancipated its select society from rival extravagance and cumbersome formalities.

That the Camp stood on the borders of the two counties of England which rank highest on the books of estate and house-agents, and that if you did not think the country lovely and the neighbourhood agreeable you must be hard to please.

That, as regards the Royal Engineers, it was one of your privileges to be hard to please, since you were entitled to their good offices; and if, after all, they sometimes failed to cure your disordered drains and smoky chimneys, you, at any rate, did not pay as well as suffer, which is the case in civil life.

That low doors to military quarters might be regarded as a practical joke on the part of authorities, who demand that soldiers shall be both tall and upright, but that man, whether military or not, is an adaptable animal and can get used to anything; and indeed it was only those officers whose thoughts were more active than their instincts who invariably crushed their best hats before starting for town.

That huts (if only they were a little higher !) had a great many advantages over small houses, which were best appreciated by those who had tried drawing lodging allowance and living in villas, and which would be fully known if ever the Lines were rebuilt in brick.

That on moonlit nights the airs that fanned the silent Camp were as dry and wholesome as by day; that the song of the distant nightingale could be heard there; and finally, that from end to end of this dwelling-place of ten thousand to (on occasion) twenty thousand men, a woman might pass at mid-

night with greater safety than in the country lanes of a rural village or a police-protected thoroughfare of the metropolis.

But, in truth, the Camp's best defence in the hearts of its defenders was that it was a camp,—military life in epitome, with all its defects and all its charm; not the least of which, to some whimsical minds, is, that it represents, as no other phase of society represents, the human pilgrimage in brief.

Here be sudden partings, but frequent re-unions; the charities and courtesies of an uncertain life lived largely in common; the hospitality of passing hosts to guests who tarry but a day.

Here, surely, should be the home of the sage as well as the soldier, where every hut might fitly carry the ancient motto, "Dwell as if about to Depart," where work bears the nobler name of duty, and where the living, hastening on his business amid "the hurryings of this life,"[1] must pause and stand to salute the dead as he is carried by.

Bare and dusty are the Parade Grounds, but they are thick with memories. Here were blessed the colours that became a young man's shroud that they might not be a nation's shame. Here march and music welcome the coming and speed the parting regiments. On this Parade the rising sun is greeted with gun-fire and trumpet clarions shriller than the cock, and there he sets to a like salute with tuck of drum. Here the young recruit drills, the warrior puts on his medal, the old pensioner steals back to watch them, and the soldiers' children play—sometimes at fighting or flag-wagging,[2] but oftener at funerals!

[1] Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*.

[2] "Flag-wagging," a name among soldiers' children for "signalling."

CHAPTER III

"*Ut migraturus habita*" ("Dwell as if about to Depart").
Old House Motto.

THE Barrack Master's wife was standing in the porch of her hut, the sides of which were of the simplest trellis-work of crossed fir-poles, through which she could watch the proceedings of the gardener without baking herself in the sun. Suddenly she snatched up a green-lined white umbrella, that had seen service in India, and ran out.

"O'Reilly! what *is* that baby doing? There! that white-headed child crossing the parade with a basket in its little arms! It's got nothing on its head. Please go and take it to its mother before it gets sunstroke."

The gardener was an Irish soldier—an old soldier, as the handkerchief depending from his cap, to protect the nape of his neck from the sun, bore witness. He was a tall man, and stepped without ceremony over the garden paling to get a nearer view of the parade. But he stepped back again at once, and resumed his place in the garden.

"He's Corporal Macdonald's child, madam. The Blind Baby, they call him. Not a bit of harm will he get. They're as hard as nails the whole lot of them. If I was to take him in now, he'd be out before my back was turned. His brothers and sisters are at the school, and Blind Baby's just as happy as the day is long, playing at funerals all the time."

"Blind! Is he blind? Poor little soul! But he's got a great round potato-basket in his arms. Surely they don't make that afflicted infant fetch and carry?"

O'Reilly laughed so heartily, that he scandalized his own sense of propriety.

"I ask your pardon, madam. But there's no fear that Blind Baby 'll fetch and carry. Every man in the Lines is his nurse."

"But what's he doing with that round hamper as big as himself?"

"It's just a make-believe for the Big Drum, madam. The 'Dead March' is his whole delight. 'Twas only yesterday I said to his father, 'Corporal,' I says, 'we'll live to see Blind Baby a bandmaster yet,' I says; 'it's a pure pleasure to see him beat out a tune with his closed fist.'

"Will I go and borrow a barrow now, madam?" added O'Reilly, returning to his duties. He was always willing and never idle, but he liked change of occupation.

"No, no. Don't go away. We shan't want a wheelbarrow till we've finished trenching this border, and picking out the stones. Then you can take them away and fetch the new soil."

"You're at a deal of pains, madam, and it's a poor patch when all's done to it."

"I can't live without flowers, O'Reilly, and the Colonel says I may do what I like with this bare strip."

"Ah! Don't touch the dirty stones with your fingers, ma'am. I'll have the lot picked in no time at all."

"You see, O'Reilly, you can't grow flowers in sand unless you can command water, and the Colonel tells me that when it's hot here the water supply

runs short, and we mayn't water the garden from the pumps."

O'Reilly smiled superior.

"The Colonel will get what water he wants, ma'am. Never fear him! There's ways and means. Look at the gardens of the Royal Engineers' Lines. In the hottest of summer weather they're as green as Old Ireland; and it's not to be supposed that the Royal Engineers can requisition showers from the skies when they need them, more than the rest of Her Majesty's forces."

"Perhaps the Royal Engineers do what I mean to do—take more pains than usual; and put in soil that will retain some moisture. One can't make poor land yield anything without pains, O'Reilly, and this is like the dry bed of a stream—all sand and pebbles."

"That's as true a word as ever ye spoke, madam, and if it were not that 'twould be taking a liberty, I'd give ye some advice about gardening in Camp. It's not the first time I'm quartered in Asholt, and I know the ways of it."

"I shall be very glad of advice. You know I have never been stationed here before."

"'Tis an old soldier's advice, madam."

"So much the better," said the lady, warmly.

O'Reilly was kneeling to his work. He now sat back on his heels, and not without a certain dignity that bade defiance to his surroundings he commenced his oration.

"Please GOD to spare you and the Colonel, madam, to put in his time as Barrack Master at this station, ye'll see many a regiment come and go, and be making themselves at home all along. And anny one that knows this place, and the nature of the soil, tear-rs would overflow his eyes to see the

regiments come for drill, and betake themselves to gardening. Maybe the boys have marched in foot-sore and fasting, in the hottest of weather, to cold comfort in empty quarters, and they'll not let many hours flit over their heads before some of 'em 'll get possession of a load of green turf, and be laying it down for borders around their huts. It's the young ones I'm speaking of; and there ye'll see them, in the blazing sun, with their shirts open, and not a thing on their heads, squaring and fitting the turfs for bare life, watering them out of old pie-dishes and stable-buckets and what-not, singing and whistling, and fetching and carrying between the pump and their quarters, just as cheerful as so many birds building their nests in the spring."

"A very pretty picture, O'Reilly. Why should it bring tears to your eyes? An old soldier like you must know that one would never have a home in quarters at all if one did not begin to make it at once."

"True for you, madam. Not a doubt of it. But it goes to your heart to see labour thrown away; and it's not once in a hundred times that grass planted like that will get hold of a soil like this, and the boys themselves at drill all along, or gone out under canvas in Bottomless Bog before the week's over, as likely as not."

"That would be unlucky. But one must take one's luck as it comes. And you've not told me, now, what you do advise for Camp gardens."

"That's just what I'm coming to, ma'am. See the old soldier! What does *he* do? Turns the bucket upside down outside his hut, and sits on it, with a cap on his head, and a handkerchief down his back, and some tin tacks, and a ball of string—trust a soldier's eye to get the lines straight—every one

of them beginning on the ground and going nearly up to the roof."

"For creepers, I suppose? What does the old soldier plant?"

"Beans, madam—scarlet-runners. These are the things for Asholt. A few beans are nothing in your baggage. They like a warm place, and when they're on the sunny side of a hut they've got it, and no mistake. They're growing while you're on duty. The flowers are the right soldier's colour; and when it comes to the beans, ye may put your hand out of the window and gather them, and no trouble at all."

"The old soldier is very wise; but I think I must have more flowers than that. So I plant, and if they die I am very sorry; and if they live, and other people have them, I try to be glad. One ought to learn to be unselfish, O'Reilly, and think of one's successors."

"And that's true, madam; barring that I never knew any one's successor to have the same fancies as himself: one plants trees to give shelter, and the next cuts them down to let in the air."

"Well, I suppose the only way is to be prepared for the worst. The rose we planted yesterday by the porch is a great favourite of mine; but the Colonel calls it 'Marching Orders.' It used to grow over my window in my old home, and I have planted it by every home I have had since; but the Colonel says whenever it settled and began to flower the regiment got the route."

"The Colonel must name it again, madam," said O'Reilly, gallantly, as he hitched up the knees of his trousers, and returned to the border. "It shall be 'Standing Orders' now, if soap and water can make it blossom, and I'm spared to attend to it

all the time. Many a hundred roses may you and the Colonel pluck from it, and never one with a thorn!"

"Thank you, O'Reilly; thank you very much. Soapy water is very good for roses, I believe?"

"It is so, madam. I put in a good deal of my time as officer's servant after I was in the Connaught Rangers, and the Captain I was with one time was as fond of flowers as yourself. There was a mighty fine rose-bush by his quarters, and every morning I had to carry out his bath to it. He used more soap than most gentlemen, and when he sent me to the town for it—'It's not for myself, O'Reilly,' he'd say, 'so much as for the Rose. Bring large tablets,' he'd say, 'and the best scented ye can get. The roses 'll be the sweeter for it.' That was his way of joking, and never a smile on his face. He was odd in many of his ways, was the Captain, but he was a grand soldier entirely; a good officer, and a good friend to his men, and to the wives and children no less. The regiment was in India when he died of cholera, in twenty-four hours, do what I would. 'Oh, the cramp in my legs, O'Reilly!' he says. 'GOD bless ye, Captain,' says I; 'never mind your legs; I'd manage the cramp, sir,' I says, 'if I could but keep up your heart.' 'Ye'll not do that, O'Reilly,' he says, 'for all your goodness; I lost it too long ago.' That was his way of joking, and never a smile on his face. 'Twas a pestilential hole we were in, and that's the truth; and cost Her Majesty more in lives than would have built healthy quarters, and given us every comfort; but the flowers throve there if we didn't, and the Captain's grave was filled till ye couldn't get the sight of him for roses. He was a good officer, and beloved of his men; and better master never a man had!"

As he ceased speaking, O'Reilly drew his sleeve sharply across his eyes, and then bent again to his work, which was why he failed to see what the Barrack Master's wife saw, and did not for some moments discover that she was no longer in the garden. The matter was this :

The Barrack Master's quarters were close to the Iron Church, and the straight road that ran past both was crossed, just beyond the church, by another straight road, which finally led out to and joined a country highway. From this highway an open carriage and pair were being driven into the camp as a soldier's funeral was marching to church. The band frightened the horses, who were got past with some difficulty, and having turned the sharp corner, were coming rapidly towards the Barrack Master's hut when Blind Baby, excited by the band, strayed from his parade-ground, tumbled, basket and all, into the ditch that divided it from the road, picked up himself and his basket, and was sturdily setting forth across the road just as the frightened horses came plunging to the spot.

The Barrack Master's wife was not very young, and not very slender. Rapid movements were not easy to her. She was nervous also, and could never afterwards remember what she did with herself in those brief moments before she became conscious that the footman had got to the horses' heads, and that she herself was almost under their feet, with Blind Baby in her arms. Blind Baby himself recalled her to consciousness by the ungrateful fashion in which he pummelled his deliverer with his fists and howled for his basket, which had rolled under the carriage to add to the confusion. Nor was he to be pacified till O'Reilly took him from her arms.

By this time men had rushed from every hut and kitchen, wash-place and shop, and were swarming to the rescue; and through the whole disturbance, like minute-guns, came the short barks of a black puppy, which Leonard had insisted upon taking with him to show to his aunt, despite the protestations of his mother: for it was Lady Jane's carriage, and this was how the sisters met.

They had been sitting together for some time, so absorbed by the strangeness and the pleasure of their new relations that Leonard and his puppy had slipped away unobserved, when Lady Jane, who was near the window, called to her sister-in-law :—" Adelaide, tell me, my dear, is this Colonel Jones? " She spoke with some trepidation. It is so easy for those unacquainted with uniforms to make strange blunders. Moreover, the Barrack Master, though soldierly-looking, was so, despite a very unsoldierly defect. He was exceedingly stout, and as he approached the miniature garden gate, Lady Jane found herself gazing with some anxiety to see if he could possibly get through.

But O'Reilly did not make an empty boast when he said that a soldier's eye was true. The Colonel came quite neatly through the toy entrance, knocked nothing down in the porch, bent and bared his head with one gesture as he passed under the drawing-room doorway, and bowing again to Lady Jane, moved straight to the side of his wife.

Something in the action—a mixture of dignity and devotion, with just a touch of defiance—went to Lady Jane's heart. She went up to him and held out both her hands :—" Please shake hands with me, Colonel Jones. I am so very happy to have found a sister ! " In a moment more she turned



"And this was how the Sisters met."

(p. 118.)

round, saying—"I must show you your nephew. Leonard!" But Leonard was not there.

"I fancy I have seen him already," said the Colonel. "If he is a very beautiful boy, very beautifully dressed in velvet, he's with O'Reilly, watching the funeral."

Lady Jane looked horrified, and Mrs. Jones looked much relieved.

"He's quite safe if he's with O'Reilly. But give me my sunshade, Henry, please; I dare say Lady Jane would like to see the funeral too."

It is an Asholt amenity to take care that you miss no opportunity of seeing a funeral. It would not have occurred to Lady Jane to wish to go, but as her only child had gone she went willingly to look for him. As they turned the corner of the hut they came straight upon it, and at that moment the "Dead March" broke forth afresh.

The drum beat out those familiar notes which strike upon the heart rather than the ear, the brass screamed, the ground trembled to the tramp of feet and the lumbering of the gun-carriage, and Lady Jane's eyes filled suddenly with tears at the sight of the dead man's accoutrements lying on the Union Jack that serves a soldier for a pall. As she dried them she saw Leonard.

Drawn up in accurate line with the edge of the road, O'Reilly was standing to salute; and as near to the Irish private as he could squeeze himself stood the boy, his whole body stretched to the closest possible imitation of his new and deeply-revered friend, his left arm glued to his side, and the back of his little right hand laid against his brow, gazing at the pathetic pageant as it passed him with devouring eyes. And behind them stood Blind Baby, beating upon his basket.

For the basket had been recovered, and Blind Baby's equanimity also; and he wandered up and down the parade again in the sun, long after the soldier's funeral had wailed its way to the graveyard, over the heather-covered hill.

CHAPTER IV

" My mind is in the anomalous condition of hating war, and loving its discipline, which has been an incalculable contribution to the sentiment of duty the devotion of the common soldier to his leader (the sign for him of hard duty), is the type of all higher devotedness, and is full of promise to other and better generations."—GEORGE ELIOT.

" YOUR sister is as nice as nice can be, Rupert; and I like the Barrack Master very much, too. He *is* stout ! But he is very active and upright, and his manners to his wife are wonderfully pretty. Do you know, there is something to me most touching in the way these two have knocked about the world together, and seem so happy with so little. Cottagers could hardly live more simply, and yet their ideas, or at any rate their experiences, seem so much larger than one's own."

" My dear Jane ! if you've taken them up from the romantic point of view all is, indeed, accomplished. I know the wealth of your imagination, and the riches of its charity. If, in such a mood, you will admit that Jones is stout, he must be fat indeed ! Never again upbraid me with the price that I paid for that Chippendale arm-chair. It will hold the Barrack Master."

" Rupert !—I cannot help saying it—it ought to have held him long ago. It makes me miserable to think that they have never been under our roof."

" Jane ! be miserable if you must; but, at least, be accurate. The Barrack Master was in India when I bought that paragon of all Chips, and he

has only come home this year. Nay, my dear! don't be vexed. I give you my word, I'm a good deal more ashamed than I like to own to think how Adelaide has been treated by the family—with me as its head. Did you make my apologies to-day, and tell her that I shall ride out to-morrow and pay my respects to her and Jones?"

"Of course. I told her you were obliged to go to town, and I would not delay to call and ask if I could be of use to them. I begged them to come here till their quarters are quite finished; but they won't. They say they are settled. I could not say much, because we ought to have asked them sooner. He is rather on his dignity with us, I think, and no wonder."

"He's disgustingly on his dignity! They both are. Because the family resented the match at first, they have refused every kind of help that one would have been glad to give him as Adelaide's husband, if only to secure their being in a decent position. Neither interest nor money would he accept, and Adelaide has followed his lead. She has very little of her own, unfortunately; and she knows how my father left things as well as I do, and never would accept a farthing more than her bare rights. I tried some dodges, through Quills; but it was of no use. The vexation is that he has taken this post of Barrack Master as a sort of pension, which need never have been. I suppose they have to make that son an allowance. It's not likely he lives on his pay. I can't conceive how they scrub along."

And as the Master of the House threw himself into the paragon of all Chips, he ran his fingers through hair, the length and disorder of which would have made the Barrack Master feel positively ill, with a gesture of truly dramatic despair.

"Your sister has made her room look wonderfully pretty. One would never imagine those huts could look as nice as they do inside. But it's like playing with a doll's house. One feels inclined to examine everything, and to be quite pleased that the windows have glass in them, and will really open and shut."

The Master of the House raised his eyebrows funnily.

"You did take rose-coloured spectacles with you to the Camp!"

Lady Jane laughed.

"I did not see the Camp itself through them. What an incomparably dreary place it is! It makes me think of little woodcuts in missionary reports—'Sketch of a Native Settlement'—rows of little black huts that look, at a distance, as if one must creep into them on all-fours; nobody about, and an iron church on the hill."

"Most accurately described! And you wonder that I regret that a native settlement should have been removed from the enchanting distance of missionary reports to become my permanent neighbour?"

"Well, I must confess the effect it produces on me is to make me feel quite ashamed of the peace and pleasure of this dear old place, the shade and greenery outside, the space above my head, and the lovely things before my eyes inside (for you know, Rupert, how I appreciate your decorative tastes, though I have so few myself. I only scolded about the Chip because I think you might have got him for less)—when so many men bred to similar comforts, and who have served their country so well, with wives I dare say quite as delicate as I am, have to be cooped up in those ugly little kennels in that dreary place——"

"What an uncomfortable thing a Scotch conscience is!" interrupted the Master of the House. "By the bye, those religious instincts, which are also characteristic of your race, must have found one redeeming feature in the Camp, the 'iron church on the hill'; especially as I imagine that it is puritanically ugly!"

"There was a funeral going into it as we drove into Camp, and I wanted to tell you the horses were very much frightened."

"Richards fidgets those horses; they're quiet enough with me."

"They did not like the military band."

"They must get used to the band and to other military nuisances. It is written in the stars, as I too clearly foresee, that we shall be driving in and out of that Camp three days a week. I can't go to my club without meeting men I was at school with who are stationed at Asholt, and expect me to look them up. As to the women, I met a man yesterday who is living in a hut, and expects a Dowager Countess and her two daughters for the ball. He has given up his dressing-room to the Dowager, and put two barrack-beds into the coal-hole for the young ladies, he says. It's an insanity!"

"Adelaide told me about the ball. The Camp seems very gay just now. They have had theatricals; and there is to be a grand Field Day this week."

"So our visitors have already informed me. They expect to go. Louisa Mainwaring is looking handsomer than ever, and I have always regarded her as a girl with a mind. I took her to see the peep I have cut opposite to the island, and I could not imagine why those fine eyes of hers looked so blank. Presently she said, 'I suppose you can see

the Camp from the little pine-wood?' And to the little pine-wood we had to go. Both the girls have got stiff necks with craning out of the carriage window to catch sight of the white tents among the heather as they came along in the train."

"I suppose we must take them to the Field Day; but I am very nervous about those horses, Rupert."

"The horses will be taken out before any firing begins. As to bands, the poor creatures must learn, like their master, to endure the brazen liveliness of military music. It's no fault of mine that our nerves are scarified by any sounds less soothing than the crooning of the wood-pigeons among the pines!"

No one looked forward to the big Field Day with keener interest than Leonard; and only a few privileged persons knew more about the arrangements for the day than he had contrived to learn.

O'Reilly was sent over with a note from Mrs. Jones to decline the offer of a seat in Lady Jane's carriage for the occasion. She was not very well. Leonard waylaid the messenger; (whom he hardly recognized as a tidy one!), and O'Reilly gladly imparted all that he knew about the Field Day: and this was a good deal. He had it from a friend—a corporal in the Head Quarters Office.

As a rule, Leonard only enjoyed a limited popularity with his mother's visitors. He was very pretty and very amusing, and had better qualities even than these; but he was restless and troublesome. On this occasion, however, the young ladies suffered him to trample their dresses and interrupt their conversation without remonstrance. He knew more about the Field Day than any one in the house, and, standing among their pretty furbelows and fancy-work in stiff military attitudes, he imparted his news with an unsuccessful imitation of an Irish accent.

"O'Reilly says the March Past 'll be at eleven o'clock on the Sandy Slopes."

"Louisa, is that Major O'Reilly of the Rifles?"

"I don't know, dear. Is your friend O'Reilly in the Rifles, Leonard?"

"I don't know. I know he's an owld soldier—he told me so."

"Old, Leonard; not owld. You mustn't talk like that."

"I shall if I like. *He* does, and I mean to."

"I dare say he did, Louisa. He's always joking."

"No he isn't. He didn't joke when the funeral went past. He looked quite grave, as if he was saying his prayers, and stood *so*."

"How touching!"

"How like him!"

"How graceful and tender-hearted Irishmen are!"

"I stood so, too. I mean to do as like him as ever I can. I do love him so very very much!"

"Dear boy!"

"You good, affectionate little soul!"

"Give me a kiss, Leonard dear."

"No, thank you. I'm too old for kissing. He's going to march past, and he's going to look out for me with the tail of his eye, and I'm going to look out for him."

"Do, Leonard; and mind you tell us when you see him coming."

"I can't promise. I might forget. But perhaps you can know him by the good-conduct stripe on his arm. He used to have two; but he lost one all along of St. Patrick's Day."

"That *can't* be your partner, Louisa!"

"Officers *never* have good-conduct stripes."

"Leonard, you ought not to talk to common soldiers. You've got a regular Irish brogue, and you're learning all sorts of Irish words. You'll grow up quite a vulgar little boy, if you don't take care."

"I don't want to take care. I like being Irish, and I shall be a vulgar little boy too, if I choose. But when I do grow up, I am going to grow into an owld, owld, Owld Soldier!"

Leonard made this statement of his intentions in his clearest manner. After which, having learned that the favour of the fair is fickleness, he left the ladies, and went to look for his Black Puppy.

The Master of the House, in arranging for his visitors to go to the Field Day, had said that Leonard was not to be of the party. He had no wish to encourage the child's fancy for soldiers: and as Leonard was invariably restless out driving, and had a trick of kicking people's shins in his changes of mood and position, he was a most uncomfortable element in a carriage full of ladies. But it is needless to say that he stoutly resisted his father's decree; and the child's disappointment was so bitter, and he howled and wept himself into such a deplorable condition, that the young ladies sacrificed their own comfort and the crispness of their new dresses to his grief, and petitioned the Master of the House that he might be allowed to go.

The Master of the House gave in. He was accustomed to yield where Leonard was concerned. But the concession proved only a prelude to another struggle. Leonard wanted the Black Puppy to go too.

On this point the young ladies presented no petition. Leonard's boots they had resolved to endure, but not the dog's paws. Lady Jane, too,

protested against the puppy, and the matter seemed settled; but at the last moment, when all but Leonard were in the carriage, and the horses chafing to be off, the child made his appearance, and stood on the entrance-steps with his puppy in his arms, and announced, in dignified sorrow, "I really cannot go if my Sweep has to be left behind."

With one consent the grown-up people turned to look at him.

Even the intoxicating delight that colour gives can hardly exceed the satisfying pleasure in which beautiful proportions steep the sense of sight; and one is often at fault to find the law that has been so exquisitely fulfilled, when the eye has no doubt of its own satisfaction.

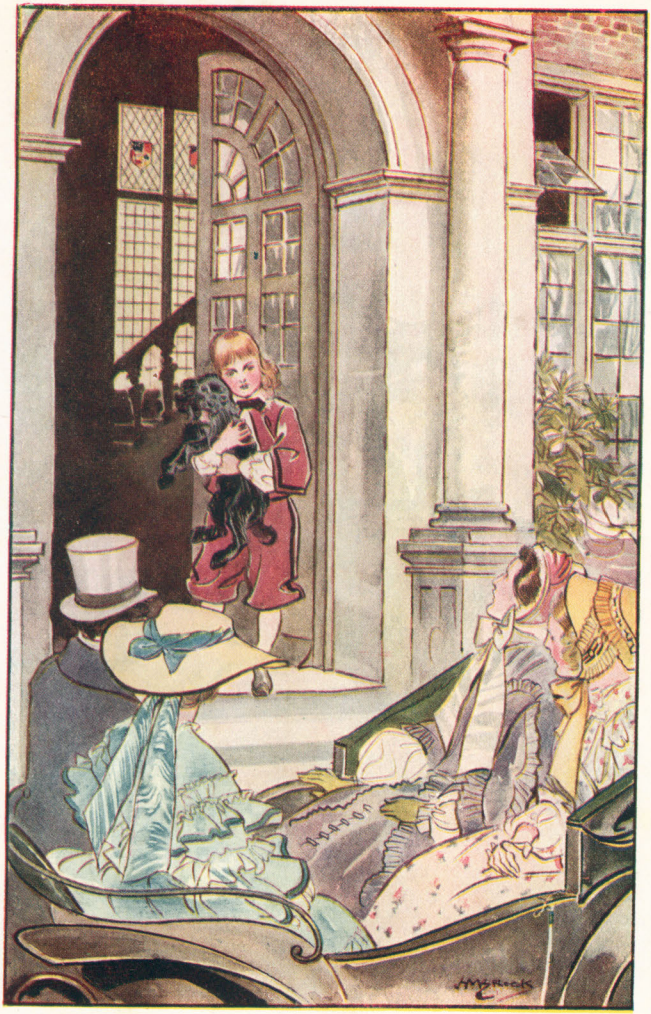
The shallow stone steps, on the top of which Leonard stood, and the old doorway that framed him, had this mysterious grace, and, truth to say, the boy's beauty was a jewel not unworthy of its setting.

A holiday dress of crimson velvet, with collar and ruffles of old lace, became him very quaintly; and as he laid a cheek like a rose-leaf against the sooty head of his pet, and they both gazed piteously at the carriage, even Lady Jane's conscience was stifled by motherly pride. He was her only child, but, as he had said of the Orderly, "a very splendid sort of one."

The Master of the House stamped his foot with an impatience that was partly real and partly, perhaps, affected.

"Well, get in somehow, if you mean to. The horses can't wait all day for you."

No ruby-throated humming-bird could have darted more swiftly from one point to another than Leonard from the old gray steps into the carriage. Little boys can be very careful when they choose,



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"'I REALLY CANNOT GO IF MY SWEEP HAS TO BE LEFT BEHIND.'"
(p. 128.)

and he trod on no toes and crumpled no finery in his flitting.

To those who know dogs, it is needless to say that the puppy showed an even superior discretion. It bore throttling without a struggle. Instinctively conscious of the alternative of being shut up in a stable for the day, and left there to bark its heart out, it shrank patiently into Leonard's grasp, and betrayed no sign of life except in the strained and pleading anxiety which a puppy's eyes so often wear.

"Your dog is a very good dog, Leonard, I must say," said Louisa Mainwaring; "but he's very ugly. I never saw such legs!"

Leonard tucked the lank black legs under his velvet and ruffles. "Oh, he's all right," he said. "He'll be very handsome soon. It's his ugly mouth."

"I wonder you didn't insist on our bringing Uncle Rupert and *his* dog to complete the party," said the Master of the House.

The notion tickled Leonard, and he laughed so heartily that the puppy's legs got loose, and required to be tucked in afresh. Then both remained quiet for several seconds, during which the puppy looked as anxious as ever; but Leonard's face wore a smile of dreamy content that doubled its loveliness.

But as the carriage passed the windows of the library a sudden thought struck him, and dispersed his repose.

Gripping his puppy firmly under his arm, he sprang to his feet—regardless of other people's—and waving his cap and feather above his head he cried aloud, "Good-bye, Uncle Rupert! Can you hear me? Uncle Rupert, I say! I am—*lætus—sorte—mea!*"

* * * * *

All the Camp was astir.

Men and bugles awoke with the dawn and the birds, and now the women and children of all ranks were on the alert. (Nowhere does so large and enthusiastic a crowd collect "to see the pretty soldiers go by," as in those places where pretty soldiers live.)

Soon after gun-fire O'Reilly made his way from his own quarters to those of the Barrack Master, opened the back-door by some process best known to himself, and had been busy for half-an-hour in the drawing-room before his proceedings woke the Colonel. They had been as noiseless as possible; but the Colonel's dressing-room opened into the drawing-room, his bedroom opened into that, and all the doors and windows were open to court the air.

"Who's there?" said the Colonel from his pillow.

"'Tis O'Reilly, Sir. I ask your pardon, Sir; but I heard that the Mistress was not well. She'll be apt to want the reclining-chair, Sir; and 'twas damaged in the unpacking. I got the screws last night, but I was busy soldiering[1] till too late; so I come in this morning, for Smith's no good at a job of the kind at all. He's a butcher to his trade."

"Mrs. Jones is much obliged to you for thinking of it, O'Reilly."

"'Tis an honour to oblige her, Sir. I done it sound and secure. 'Tis as safe as a rock; but I'd like to nail a bit of canvas on from the porch to the other side of the hut, for shelter, in case she'd be sitting out to taste the air and see the troops go by. 'Twill not take me five minutes, if the hammering wouldn't be too much for the Mistress. 'Tis a hot

[1] "Soldiering"—a barrack term for the furbishing up of accoutrements, &c.

day, Sir, for certain, till the guns bring the rain down."

"Put it up, if you've time."

"I will, Sir. I left your sword and gloves on the kitchen-table, Sir; and I told Smith to water the rose before the sun's on to it."

With which O'Reilly adjusted the cushions of the invalid-chair, and having nailed up the bit of canvas outside, so as to form an impromptu veranda, he ran back to his quarters to put himself into marching order for the Field Day.

The Field Day broke into smiles of sunshine too early to be lasting. By breakfast-time the rain came down without waiting for the guns; but those most concerned took the change of weather cheerfully, as soldiers should. Rain damages uniforms, but it lays dust; and the dust of the Sandy Slopes was dust indeed!

After a pelting shower the sun broke forth again, and from that time onwards the weather was "Queen's Weather," and Asholt was at its best. The sandy Camp lay girdled by a zone of the verdure of early summer, which passed by miles of distance, through exquisite gradations of many blues, to meet the soft threatenings of the changeable sky. Those lowering and yet tender rain-clouds which hover over the British Isles, guardian spirits of that scantly-recognized blessing—a temperate climate; Naiads of the waters over the earth, whose caprices betwixt storm and sunshine fling such beauty upon a landscape as has no parallel except in the common simile of a fair face quivering between tears and smiles.

Smiles were in the ascendant as the regiments began to leave their parade-grounds, and the surface of the Camp (usually quiet, even to dullness)

sparkled with movement. Along every principal road the colour and glitter of marching troops rippled like streams, and as the band of one regiment died away another broke upon the excited ear.

At the outlets of the Camp eager crowds waited patiently in the dusty hedges to greet favourite regiments, or watch for personal friends amongst the troops; and on the ways to the Sandy Slopes every kind of vehicle, from a drag to a donkey-cart, and every variety of pedestrian, from an energetic tourist carrying a field-glass to a more admirably energetic mother carrying a baby, disputed the highway with cavalry in brazen breastplates, and horse-artillery whose gallant show was drowned in its own dust.

Lady Jane's visitors had expressed themselves as anxious not to miss anything, and troops were still pouring out of the Camp when the Master of the House brought his skittish horses to where a "block" had just occurred at the turn to the Sandy Slopes.

What the shins and toes of the visitors endured whilst that knot of troops of all arms disentangled itself and streamed away in gay and glittering lines, could only have been concealed by the supreme powers of endurance latent in the weaker sex; for with the sight of every fresh regiment Leonard changed his plans for his own future career, and with every change he forgot a fresh promise to keep quiet, and took by storm that corner of the carriage which for the moment offered the best point of view.

Suddenly, through the noise and dust, and above the dying away of conflicting bands into the distance, there came another sound—a sound unlike any other —the skirling of the pipes; and Lady Jane sprang up and put her arms about her son, and bade him watch for the Highlanders, and if Cousin Alan looked

up as he went past, to cry "Hurrah for Bonnie Scotland!"

For this sound and this sight—the bagpipes and the Highlanders—a sandy-faced Scotch lad on the tramp to Southampton had waited for an hour past, frowning and freckling his face in the sun, and exasperating a naturally *dour* temper by reflecting on the probable pride and heartlessness of folk who wore such soft complexions and pretty clothes as the ladies and the little boy in the carriage on the other side of the road.

But when the skirling of the pipes cleft the air his cold eyes softened as he caught sight of Leonard's face, and the echo that he made to Leonard's cheer was caught up by the good-humoured crowd, who gave the Scotch regiment a willing ovation as it swung proudly by. After which the carriage moved on, and for a time Leonard sat very still. He was thinking of Cousin Alan and his comrades; of the tossing plumes that shaded their fierce eyes; of the swing of kilt and sporran with their unfettered limbs; of the rhythmic tread of their white feet and the fluttering ribbons on the bagpipes; and of Alan's handsome face looking out of his most becoming bravery.

The result of his meditations Leonard announced with his usual lucidity—

"I am Scotch, not Irish, though O'Reilly *is* the nicest man I ever knew. But I must tell him that I really cannot grow up into an Owld Soldier, because I mean to be a young Highland officer, and look at ladies with my eyes like *this*—and carry my sword *so!*"

CHAPTER V

" O, that a man might know the end of this day's business, ere it come ! "—*Julius Cæsar.*

YEARS of living amongst soldiers had increased, rather than diminished, Mrs. Jones's relish for the sights and sounds of military life.

The charm of novelty is proverbially great, but it is not so powerful as that peculiar spell which drew the retired tallow-chandler back to " shop " on melting-days, and which guided the choice of the sexton of a cemetery who only took one holiday trip in the course of seven years, and then he went to a cemetery at some distance to see how they managed matters there. And, indeed, poor humanity may be very thankful for the infatuation, since it goes far to make life pleasant in the living to plain folk who do not make a point of being discontented.

In obedience to this law of nature, the Barrack Master's wife did exactly what O'Reilly had expected her to do. As she could not drive to the Field Day, she strolled out to see the troops go by. Then the vigour derived from breakfast and the freshness of the morning air began to fail, the day grew hotter, the camp looked dreary and deserted, and, either from physical weakness or from some untold cause, a nameless anxiety, a sense of trouble in the air, began to oppress her.

Wandering out again to try and shake it off, it

was almost a relief, like the solving of a riddle, to find Blind Baby sitting upon his Big Drum, too low-spirited to play the " Dead March," and crying because all the bands had " gone right away." Mrs. Jones made friends with him, and led him off to her hut for consolation, and he was soon as happy as ever, standing by the piano and beating upon his basket in time to the tunes she played for him. But the day and the hut grew hotter, and her back ached, and the nameless anxiety re-asserted itself, and was not relieved by Blind Baby's preference for the " Dead March " over every other tune with which she tried to beguile him.

And when he had gone back to his own Parade, with a large piece of cake and many assurances that the bands would undoubtedly return, and the day wore on, and the hut became like an oven (in the absence of any appliances to mitigate the heat), the Barrack Master's wife came to the hasty conclusion that Asholt was hotter than India, whatever thermometers might say; and, too weary to seek for breezes outside, or to find a restful angle of the reclining-chair inside, she folded her hands in her lap and abandoned herself to the most universal remedy for most ills—patience. And Patience was its own reward, for she fell asleep.

Her last thoughts as she dozed off were of her husband and son, wishing that they were safe home again, that she might assure herself that it was not on their account that there was trouble in the air. Then she dreamed of being roused by the Colonel's voice saying, " I have bad news to tell you——" and was really awakened by straining in her dream to discover what hindered him from completing his sentence.

She had slept some time—it was now afternoon, and the air was full of sounds of the returning bands. She went out into the road and saw the Barrack Master (he was easy to distinguish at some distance !) pause on his homeward way, and then she saw her son running to join his father, with his sword under his arm; and they came on together, talking as they came.

And as soon as they got within earshot she said, " Have you bad news to tell me ? "

The Colonel ran up and drew her hand within his arm.

" Come indoors, dear Love."

" You are both well ? "

" Both of us. Brutally so."

" Quite well, dear Mother."

Her son was taking her other hand into caressing care; there could be no doubt about the bad news.

" Please tell me what it is."

" There has been an accident——"

" To whom ? "

" To your brother's child; that jolly little chap——"

" Oh, Henry ! how ? "

" He was standing up in the carriage, I believe, with a dog in his arms. George saw him when he went past—didn't you ? "

" Yes. I wonder he didn't fall then. I fancy some one had told him it was our regiment. The dog was struggling, but he would take off his hat to us——"

The young soldier choked, and added with difficulty, " I think I never saw so lovely a face. Poor little cousin ! "

" And he overbalanced himself ? "

"Not when George saw him. I believe it was when the Horse Artillery were going by at the gallop. They say he got so much excited, and the dog barked, and they both fell. Some say there were people moving a drag, and some that he fell under the horse of a patrol. Anyhow, I'm afraid he's very much hurt. They took him straight home in an ambulance-waggon to save time. Erskine went with him. I sent off a telegram for them for a swell surgeon from town, and Lady Jane promised a line if I send over this evening. O'Reilly must go after dinner and wait for the news."

O'Reilly, sitting stiffly amid the coming and going of the servants at the Hall, was too deeply devoured by anxiety to trouble himself as to whether the footman's survey of his uniform bespoke more interest or contempt. But when—just after gun-fire had sounded from the distant camp—Jemima brought him the long-waited-for note, he caught the girl's hand, and held it for some moments before he was able to say, "Just tell me, miss; is it good news or bad that I'll be carrying back in this bit of paper?" And as Jemima only answered by sobs, he added, almost impatiently, "Will he live, dear? Nod your head if ye can do no more."

Jemima nodded, and the soldier dropped her hand, drew a long breath, and gave himself one of those shakes with which an Irishman so often throws off care.

"Ah, then, dry your eyes, darlin'; while there's life there's hope."

But Jemima sobbed still.

"The doctor—from London—says he may live a good while, but—but—he's to be a cripple all his days!"

"Now wouldn't I rather be meeting a tiger this evening than see the mistress's face when she gets that news!"

And O'Reilly strode back to Camp.

Going along through a shady part of the road in the dusk, seeing nothing but the red glow of the pipe with which he was consoling himself, the soldier stumbled against a lad sleeping on the grass by the roadside. It was the tramping Scotchman, and as he sprang to his feet the two Kelts broke into a fiery dialogue that seemed as if it could only come to blows.

It did not. It came to the good-natured soldier's filling the wayfarer's pipe for him.

"Much good may it do ye! And maybe the next time a decent man that's hastening home on the wings of misfortune stumbles against ye, ye'll not be so apt to take offence."

"I ask your pardon, man; I was barely wakened, and I took ye for one of these gay red-coats blustering hame after a bloodless battle on the Field Day, as they ca' it."

"Bad luck to the Field Day! A darker never dawned; and wouldn't a bloodier battle have spared a child?"

"Your child? What's happened to the bairn?"

"My child indeed! And his mother a lady of title, no less."

"What's got him?"

"Fell out of the carriage, and was trampled into a cripple for all the days of his life. He that had set as fine a heart as ever beat on being a soldier; and a grand one he'd have made. 'Sure 'tis a nobleman ye'll be,' says I. 'Tis an owld soldier I mean to be, O'Reilly,' says he. And——"

"Fond of the soldiers—his mother a leddy?

Man! had he a braw new velvet coat and the face of an angel on him?"

"He had so."

"And I that thocht they'd all this warld could offer them!—A cripple? Ech, sirs!"

CHAPTER VI

"I will do it . . . for I am weak by nature, and very timorous, unless where a strong sense of duty holdeth and supporteth me. There GOD acteth, and not His creature."

LADY JANE GREY.

LEONARD was to some extent a spoiled child. But it demands a great deal of unselfish foresight, and of self-discipline, to do more for a beautiful and loving pet than play with it.

And if his grace and beauty and high spirits had been strong temptations to give him everything he desired, and his own way above all, how much greater were the excuses for indulging every whim when the radiant loveliness of health had faded to the wan wistfulness of pain, when the young limbs bounded no more, and when his boyish hopes and hereditary ambitions were cut off by the shears of a destiny that seemed drearier than death?

As soon as the poor child was able to be moved his parents took a place on the west coast of Scotland, and carried him thither.

The neighbourhood of Asholt had become intolerable by them for some time to come, and a soft climate and sea-breezes were recommended for his general health.

Jemima's dismissal was revoked. Leonard flatly, and indeed furiously, refused to have any other nurse. During the first crisis a skilled hospital nurse was engaged, but from the time that he fully

recovered consciousness he would receive help from no hands but those of Jemima and Lady Jane.

Far older and wiser patients than he become ruthless in their demands upon the time and strength of those about them; and Leonard did not spare his willing slaves by night or by day. It increased their difficulties and his sufferings that the poor child was absolutely unaccustomed to prompt obedience, and disputed the Doctor's orders as he had been accustomed to dispute all others.

Lady Jane's health became very much broken, but Jemima was fortunately possessed of a sturdy body and an inactive mind, and with a devotion little less than maternal she gave up both to Leonard's service.

He had a third slave of his bed-chamber—a black one—the Black Puppy, from whom he had resolutely refused to part, and whom he insisted upon having upon his bed, to the Doctor's disgust. When months passed, and the Black Puppy became a Black Dog, large and cumbersome, another effort was made to induce Leonard to part with him at night; but he only complained bitterly.

"It is very odd that there cannot be a bed big enough for me and my dog. I am an invalid, and I ought to have what I want."

So The Sweep remained as his bedfellow.

The Sweep also played the part of the last straw in the drama of Jemima's life; for Leonard would allow no one but his own dear nurse to wash his own dear dog; and odd hours, in which Jemima might have snatched a little rest and relaxation, were spent by her in getting the big dog's still lanky legs into a tub, and keeping him there, and washing him, and drying and combing him into fit condition to spring back on to Leonard's coverlet when that imperious little invalid called for him.

It was a touching manifestation of the dog's intelligence that he learned with the utmost care to avoid jostling or hurting the poor suffering little body of his master.

Leonard's fourth slave was his father.

But the Master of the House had no faculty for nursing, and was by no means possessed of the patience needed to persuade Leonard for his good. So he could only be with the child when he was fit to be read or played to, and later on, when he was able to be out of doors. And at times he went away out of sight of his son's sufferings, and tried to stifle the remembrance of a calamity and disappointment, whose bitterness his own heart alone fully knew.

After the lapse of nearly two years Leonard suddenly asked to be taken home. He was tired of the shore, and wanted to see if The Sweep remembered the park. He wanted to see if Uncle Rupert would look surprised to see him going about in a wheel-chair. He wanted to go to the Camp again, now the Doctor said he might have drives, and see if O'Reilly was alive still, and his uncle, and his aunt, and his cousin. He wanted Father to play to him on their own organ, their very own organ, and—no, thank you !—he did not want any other music now.

He hated this nasty place, and wanted to go home. If he was going to live he wanted to live there, and if he was going to die he wanted to die there, and have his funeral his own way, if they knew a General and could borrow a gun-carriage and a band.

He didn't want to eat or to drink, or to go to sleep, or to take his medicine, or to go out and send The Sweep into the sea, or to be read to or played to; he wanted to go home—home—home !

The upshot of which was, that before his parents

had time to put into words the idea that the agonizing associations of Asholt were still quite unendurable, they found themselves congratulating each other on having got Leonard safely home before he had cried himself into convulsions over twenty-four hours' delay.

For a time, being at home seemed to revive him. He was in less pain, in better spirits, had more appetite, and was out a great deal with his dog and his nurse. But he fatigued himself, which made him fretful, and he certainly grew more imperious every day.

His whim was to be wheeled into every nook and corner of the place, inside and out, and to show them to The Sweep. And who could have had the heart to refuse him anything in the face of that dread affliction which had so changed him amid the unchanged surroundings of his old home?

Jemima led the life of a prisoner on the treadmill. When she wasn't pushing him about she was going errands for him, fetching and carrying. She was "never off her feet."

He moved about a little now on crutches, though he had not strength to be very active with them, as some cripples are. But they became ready instruments of his impatience to thump the floor with one end, and not infrequently to strike those who offended him with the other.

His face was little less beautiful than of old, but it looked wan and weird; and his beauty was often marred by what is more destructive of beauty even than sickness—the pinched lines of peevishness and ill-temper. He suffered less, but he looked more unhappy, was more difficult to please, and more impatient with all efforts to please him. But then, though nothing is truer than that patience is its own

reward, it has to be learned first. And, with children, what has to be learned must be taught.

To this point Lady Jane's meditations brought her one day as she paced up and down her own morning-room, and stood before the window which looked down where the elm trees made long shadows on the grass; for the sun was declining, greatly to Jemima's relief, who had been toiling in Leonard's service through the hottest hours of a summer day.

Lady Jane had a tender conscience, and just now it was a very uneasy one. She was one of those somewhat rare souls who are by nature absolutely true. Not so much with elaborate avoidance of lying, or an aggressive candour, as straight-minded, single-eyed, clear-headed, and pure-hearted; a soul to which the truth and reality of things, and the facing of things, came as naturally as the sham of them and the blinking of them comes to others.

When such a nature has strong affections it is no light matter if love and duty come into conflict. They were in conflict now, and the mother's heart was pierced with a two-edged sword. For if she truly believed what she believed, her duty towards Leonard was not only that of a tender mother to a suffering child, but the duty of one soul to another soul, whose responsibilities no man might deliver him from, nor make agreement unto GOD that he should be quit of them.

And if the disabling of his body did not stop the developing, one way or another, of his mind; if to learn fortitude and patience under his pains was not only his highest duty but his best chance of happiness, then, if she failed to teach him these, of what profit was it that she would willingly have endured all his sufferings ten times over that life might be all sunshine for him?

And deep down in her truthful soul another thought rankled. No one but herself knew how the pride of her heart had been stirred by Leonard's love for soldiers, his brave ambitions, the high spirit and heroic instincts which he inherited from a long line of gallant men and noble women. Had her pride been a sham? Did she only care for the courage of the battle-field? Was she willing that her son should be a coward, because it was not the trumpet's sound that summoned him to fortitude? She had strung her heart to the thought that, like many a mother of her race, she might live to gird on his sword; should she fail to help him to carry his cross?

At this point a cry came from below the window, and looking out she saw Leonard, beside himself with passion, raining blows like hail with his crutch upon poor Jemima; The Sweep watching matters nervously from under a garden seat.

Leonard had been irritable all day, and this was the second serious outbreak. The first had sent the Master of the House to town with a deeply-knitted brow.

Vexed at being thwarted in some slight matter, when he was sitting in his wheel-chair by the side of his father in the library, he had seized a sheaf of papers tied together with amber-coloured ribbon, and had torn them to shreds. It was a fair copy of the first two cantos of *The Soul's Satiety*, a poem on which the Master of the House had been engaged for some years. He had not touched it in Scotland, and was now beginning to work at it again. He could not scold his cripple child, but he had gone up to London in a far from comfortable mood.

And now Leonard was banging poor Jemima with his crutches! Lady Jane felt that her conscience had not roused her an hour too soon.

The Master of the House dined in town, and Leonard had tea with his mother in her very own room; and The Sweep had tea there too.

And when the old elms looked black against the primrose-coloured sky, and it had been Leonard's bed-time for half-an-hour past, the three were together still.

* * * * *

"I beg your pardon, Jemima, I am very sorry, and I'll never do so any more. I didn't want to beg your pardon before, because I was naughty, and because you trod on my Sweep's foot. But I beg your pardon now, because I am good—at least I am better, and I am going to try to be good."

Leonard's voice was as clear as ever, and his manner as direct and forcible. Thus he contrived to say so much before Jemima burst in (she was putting him to bed)—

"My lamb! my pretty! You're always good——"

"Don't tell stories, Jemima; and please don't contradict me, for it makes me cross; and if I am cross I can't be good; and if I am not good all to-morrow I am not to be allowed to go down-stairs after dinner. And there's a V.C. coming to dinner, and I do want to see him more than I want anything else in all the world."

CHAPTER VII

"What is there in the world to distinguish virtues from dishonour, or that can make anything rewardable, but the labour and the danger, the pain and the difficulty?"—JEREMY TAYLOR.

THE V. C. did not look like a bloodthirsty warrior. He had a smooth, oval, olivart face, and dreamy eyes. He was not very big, and he was absolutely unpretending. He was a young man, and only by the courtesy of his manners escaped the imputation of being a shy young man.

Before the campaign in which he won his cross he was most distinctly known in society as having a very beautiful voice and a very charming way of singing, and yet as giving himself no airs on the subject of an accomplishment which makes some men almost intolerable by their fellow-men.

He was a favourite with ladies on several accounts, large and small. Among the latter was his fastidious choice in the words of the songs he sang, and sang with a rare fineness of enunciation.

It is not always safe to believe that a singer means what he sings; but if he sing very noble words with justness and felicity, the ear rarely refuses to flatter itself that it is learning some of the secrets of a noble heart.

Upon a silence that could be felt the last notes of such a song had just fallen. The V. C.'s lips were closed, and those of the Master of the House (who

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had been accompanying him) were still parted with a smile of approval, when the wheels of his chair and some little fuss at the drawing-room door announced that Leonard had come to claim his mother's promise. And when Lady Jane rose and went to meet him, the V. C. followed her.

"There is my boy, of whom I told you. Leonard, this is the gentleman you have wished so much to see."

The V. C., who sang so easily, was not a ready speaker, and the sight of Leonard took him by surprise, and kept him silent. He had been prepared to pity and be good-natured to a lame child who had a whim to see him; but not for this vision of rare beauty, beautifully dressed, with crippled limbs lapped in Eastern embroideries by his colour-loving father, and whose wan face and wonderful eyes were lambent with an intelligence so eager and so wistful, that the creature looked less like a morsel of suffering humanity than like a soul fretted by the brief detention of an all-but-broken chain.

"How do you do, V. C.? I am very glad to see you. I wanted to see you more than anything in the world. I hope you don't mind seeing me because I have been a coward, for I mean to be brave now; and that is why I wanted to see you so much, because you are such a very brave man. The reason I was a coward was partly with being so cross when my back hurts, but particularly with hitting Jemima with my crutches, for no one but a coward strikes a woman. She trod on my dog's toes. This is my dog. Please pat him; he would like to be patted by a V. C. He is called The Sweep because he is black. He lives with me all along. I *have* hit *him*, but I hope I shall not be naughty again any more. I wanted to grow up into a brave soldier, but I don't think, perhaps,

that I ever can now; but Mother says I can be a brave cripple. I would rather be a brave soldier, but I'm going to try to be a brave cripple. Jemima says there's no saying what you can do till you try. Please show me your Victoria Cross."

"It's on my tunic, and that's in my quarters in Camp. I'm so sorry."

"So am I. I knew you lived in Camp. I like the Camp, and I want you to tell me about your hut. Do you know my uncle, Colonel Jones? Do you know my aunt, Mrs. Jones? And my cousin, Mr. Jones? Do you know a very nice Irishman, with one good-conduct stripe, called O'Reilly? Do you know my cousin Alan in the Highlanders? But I believe he has gone away. I have so many things I want to ask you, and oh!—those ladies are coming after us! They want to take you away. Look at that ugly old thing with a hook-nose and an eye-glass and a lace shawl and a green dress; she's just like the Poll Parrot in the housekeeper's room. But she's looking at you. Mother! Mother dear! Don't let them take him away. You did promise me, you know you did, that if I was good all to-day I should talk to the V. C. I can't talk to him if I can't have him all to myself. Do let us go into the library, and be all to ourselves. Do keep those women away, particularly the Poll Parrot. Oh, I hope I shan't be naughty! I do feel so impatient! I was good, you know I was. Why doesn't James come and show my friend into the library, and carry me out of my chair?"

"Let me carry you, little friend, and we'll run away together, and the company will say, 'There goes a V. C. running away from a Poll Parrot in a lace shawl!'"

"Ha! ha! You are nice and funny. But *can*

you carry me? Take off this thing! Did you ever carry anybody that had been hurt?"

"Yes, several people—much bigger than you."

"Men?"

"Men."

"Men hurt like me, or wounded in battle?"

"Wounded in battle."

"Poor things! Did they die?"

"Some of them."

"I shall die pretty soon, I believe. I meant to die young, but more grown-up than this, and in battle. About your age, I think. How old are you?"

"I shall be twenty-five in October."

"That's rather old. I meant about Uncle Rupert's age. He died in battle. He was seventeen. You carry very comfortably. Now we're safe! Put me on the yellow sofa, please. I want all the cushions, because of my back. It's because of my back, you know, that I can't grow up into a soldier. I don't think I possibly can. Soldiers do have to have such very straight backs, and Jemima thinks mine will never be straight again 'on this side the grave.' So I've got to try and be brave as I am; and that's why I wanted to see you. Do you mind my talking rather more than you? I have so very much to say, and I've only a quarter of an hour, because of its being long past my bed-time, and a good lot of that has gone."

"Please talk, and let me listen."

"Thank you. Pat The Sweep again, please. He thinks we're neglecting him. That's why he gets up and knocks you with his head."

"Poor Sweep! Good old dog!"

"Thank you. Now should you think that if I am very good, and not cross about a lot of pain in my

back and my head—really a good lot—that that would count up to be as brave as having one wound if I'd been a soldier? "

"Certainly."

"Mother says it would, and I think it might. Not a very big wound, of course, but a poke with a spear, or something of that sort. It *is* very bad sometimes, particularly when it keeps you awake at night."

"My little friend, *that* would count for lying out all night wounded on the field when the battle's over. Soldiers are not always fighting."

"Did you ever lie out for a night on a battle-field?"

"Yes, once."

"Did the night seem very long?"

"Very long; and we were very thirsty."

"So am I sometimes, but I have barley-water and lemons by my bed, and jelly, and lots of things. You'd no barley-water, had you?"

"No."

"Nothing?"

"Nothing till the rain fell, then we sucked our clothes."

"It would take a lot of my bad nights to count up to that! But I think when I'm ill in bed I might count that like being a soldier in hospital?"

"Of course."

"I thought—no matter how good I got to be—nothing could ever count up to be as brave as a real battle, leading your men on and fighting for your country, though you know you may be killed any minute. But Mother says, if I *could* try very hard, and think of poor Jemima as well as myself, and keep brave in spite of feeling miserable, that then (particularly as I shan't be very long before I do die) it would be as good as if I'd lived to be as old as Uncle Rupert,

and fought bravely when the battle was against me, and cheered on my men, though I knew I could never come out of it alive. Do you think it *could* count up to that? *Do you?* Oh, do answer me, and don't stroke my head! I get so impatient. You've been in battles—do you?"

"I do, I do."

"You're a V. C., and you ought to know. I suppose nothing—not even if I could be good always, from this minute right away till I die—nothing could ever count up to the courage of a V. C.?"

"GOD knows it could, a thousand times over!"

"Where are you going? Please don't go. Look at me. They're not going to chop the Queen's head off, are they?"

"Heaven forbid! What are you thinking about?"

"Why, because—— Look at me again. Ah! you've winked it away, but your eyes were full of tears; and the only other brave man I ever heard of crying was Uncle Rupert, and that was because he knew they were going to chop the poor King's head off."

"That was enough to make anybody cry."

"I know it was. But do you know now, when I'm wheeling about in my chair and playing with him, and he looks at me wherever I go; sometimes for a bit I forget about the King, and I fancy he is sorry for me. Sorry, I mean, that I can't jump about, and creep under the table. Under the table was the only place where I could get out of the sight of his eyes. Oh, dear! there's Jemima."

"But you are going to be good?"

"I know I am. And I'm going to do lessons again. I did a little French this morning—a story. Mother did most of it; but I know what the French

officer called the poor old French soldier when he went to see him in a hospital."

"What?"

"*Mon brave.* That means 'my brave fellow.' A nice name, wasn't it?"

"Very nice. Here's Jemima."

"I'm coming, Jemima. I'm not going to be naughty; but you may go back to the chair, for this officer will carry me. He carries so comfortably. Come along, my Sweep. Thank you so much. You have put me in beautifully. Kiss me, please. Good-night, V. C."

"Good-night, *mon brave.*"

CHAPTER VIII

" I am a man of no strength at all of body, nor yet of mind; but would, if I could, though I can but crawl, spend my life in the pilgrims' way. When I came at the gate that is at the head of the way, the lord of that place did entertain me freely . . . gave me such things that were necessary for my journey, and bid me hope to the end. . . . Other brunts I also look for; but this I have resolved on, to wit, to run when I can, to go when I cannot run, and to creep when I cannot go. As to the main, I thank Him that loves me, I am fixed; my way is before me, my mind is beyond the river that has no bridge, though I am as you see.

" And behold—Mr. Ready-to-halt came by with his crutches in his hand, and he was also going on Pilgrimage."—BUNYAN'S *Pilgrim's Progress.*

" AND if we tie it with the amber-coloured ribbon, then every time I have it out to put in a new Poor Thing, I shall remember how very naughty I was, and how I spoilt your poetry."

" Then we'll certainly tie it with something else," said the Master of the House, and he jerked away the ribbon with a gesture as decisive as his words. " Let bygones be bygones. If *I* forget it, *you* needn't remember it ! "

" Oh, but, indeed, I ought to remember it; and I do think I *better had*—to remind myself never, never to be so naughty again ! "

" Your mother's own son ! " muttered the Master of the House; and he added aloud : " Well, I forbid you to remember it—so there ! It'll be naughty if you do. Here's some red ribbon. That should please you, as you're so fond of soldiers."

Leonard and his father were seated side by side at a table in the library. The dog lay at their feet.

They were very busy; the Master of the House working under Leonard's direction, who, issuing his orders from his wheel-chair, was so full of anxiety and importance, that when Lady Jane opened the library-door he knitted his brow and put up one thin little hand, in a comically old-fashioned manner, to deprecate interruption.

"Don't make any disturbance, Mother dear, if you please. Father and I are very much engaged."

"Don't you think, Len, it would be kind to let poor Mother see what we are doing, and tell her about it?"

Leonard pondered an instant.

"Well——I don't mind."

Then, as his mother's arm came round him, he added, impetuously—

"Yes, I should like to. *You* can show, Father dear, and *I'll* do all the explaining."

The Master of the House displayed some sheets of paper, tied with ribbon, which already contained a good deal of his handiwork, including a finely-illuminated capital L on the title-page.

"It is to be called the 'Book of Poor Things,' Mother dear. We're doing it in bits first; then it will be bound. It's a collection—a collection of Poor Things who've been hurt, like me; or blind, like the Organ-tuner; or had their heads—no, not their heads, they couldn't go on doing things after that—had their legs or their arms chopped off in battle, and are very good and brave about it, and manage very, very nearly as well as people who have got nothing the matter with them. Father doesn't think Poor Things is a good name. He wanted to call it

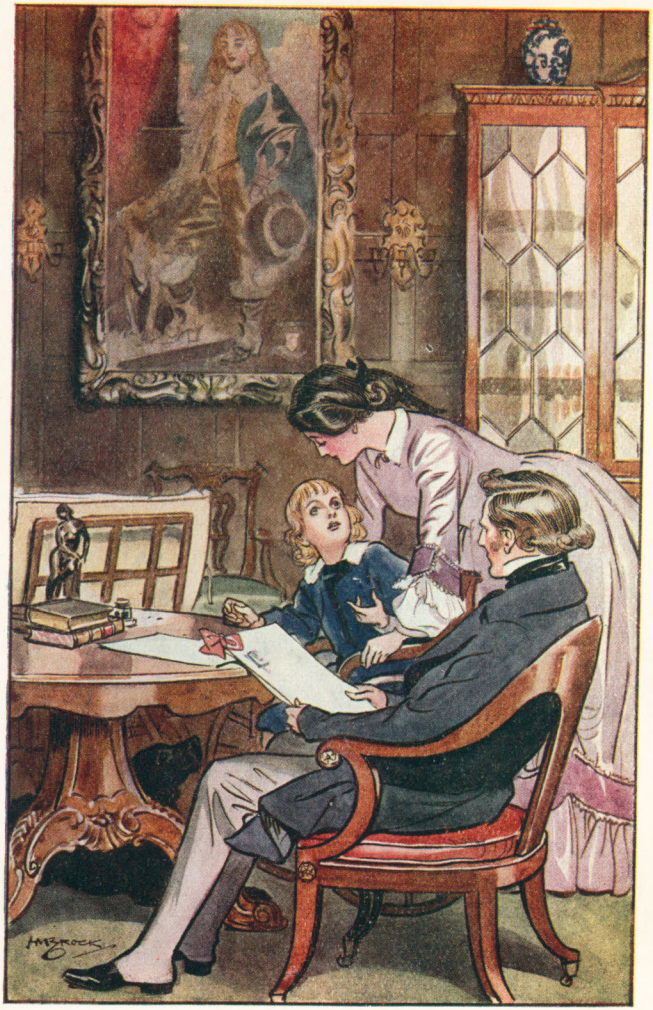
'Masters of Fate,' because of some poetry. What was it, Father?"

"'Man is man and Master of his Fate,'" quoted the Master of the House.

"Yes, that's it. But I don't understand it so well as Poor Things. They *are* Poor Things, you know, and of course we shall only put in brave Poor Things: not cowardly Poor Things. It was all my idea; only Father is doing the ruling and printing, and illuminating for me. I thought of it when the Organ-tuner was here."

"The Organ-tuner?"

"Yes, I heard the organ, and I made James carry me in, and put me in the arm-chair close to the organ. And the Tuner was tuning, and he looked round, and James said, 'It's the young gentleman,' and the Tuner said, 'Good-morning, Sir,' and I said, 'Good-morning, Tuner; go on tuning, please, for I want to see you do it.' And he went on; and he dropped a tin thing, like a big extinguisher, on to the floor; and he got down to look for it, and he felt about in such a funny way that I burst out laughing. I didn't mean to be rude; I couldn't help it. And I said, 'Can't you see it? It's just under the table.' And he said, 'I can't see anything, Sir; I'm stone blind.' And he said, perhaps I would be kind enough to give it him. And I said I was very sorry, but I hadn't got my crutches, and so I couldn't get out of my chair without some one to help me. And he was so awfully sorry for me, you can't think! He said he didn't know I was more afflicted than he was; but I was awfully sorry for him, for I've tried shutting my eyes, and you can bear it just a minute, but then you *must* open them to see again. And I said, 'How can you do anything when you see nothing but blackness all along?' And he says he can do well enough as



"'IT IS TO BE CALLED THE "BOOK OF POOR THINGS," MOTHER DEAR.'"

(p. 155.)

TEACHERS' COLLEGE LIBRARY

long as he's spared the use of his limbs to earn his own livelihood. And I said, 'Are there any more blind men, do you think, that earn their own livelihood? I wish I could earn mine!' And he said, 'There are a good many blind tuners, Sir.' And I said, 'Go on tuning, please: I like to hear you do it.' And he went on, and I did like him so much. Do you know the blind tuner, Mother dear? And don't you like him very much? I think he is just what you think very good, and I think V. C. would think it nearly as brave as a battle to be afflicted and go on earning your own livelihood when you can see nothing but blackness all along. Poor man!"

"I do think it very good of him, my darling, and very brave."

"I knew you would. And then I thought perhaps there are lots of brave afflicted people—Poor Things! and perhaps there never was anybody but me who wasn't. And I wished I knew their names; and I asked the Tuner his name, and he told me. And then I thought of my book, for a good idea—a collection, you know. And I thought perhaps, by degrees, I might collect three hundred and sixty-five Poor Things, all brave. And so I am making Father rule it like his Diary, and we've got the Tuner's name down for the first of January; and if you can think of anybody else you must tell me, and if I think they're afflicted enough and brave enough, I'll put them in. But I shall have to be rather particular, for we don't want to fill up too fast. Now, Father, I've done the explaining, so you can show your part. Look, Mother, hasn't he ruled it well? There's only one tiny mess, and it was The Sweep shaking the table with getting up to be patted."

"He has ruled it beautifully. But what a handsome L!"

"Oh, I forget! Wait a minute, Father; the explaining isn't quite finished. What do you think that L stands for, Mother dear?"

"For Leonard, I suppose."

"No, no! What fun! You're quite wrong. Guess again."

"Is it not the Tuner's name?"

"Oh, no! He's in the first of January—I told you so. And in plain printing. Father really couldn't illuminate three hundred and sixty-five Poor Things!"

"Of course he couldn't. It was silly of me to think so."

"Do you give it up?"

"I must. I cannot guess."

"It's the beginning of '*Lætus sorte mea.*' Ah, you know now! You ought to have guessed without my telling you. Do you remember? I remember, and I mean to remember. I told Jemima that very night. I said, 'It means Happy with my fate, and in our family we have to be happy with it, whatever sort of a one it is.' For you told me so. And I told the Tuner, and he liked hearing about it very much. And then he went on tuning, and he smiled so when he was listening to the notes, I thought he looked very happy; so I asked him, and he said, Yes, he was always happy when he was meddling with a musical instrument. But I thought, most likely all brave Poor Things are happy with their fate, even if they can't tune; and I asked Father, and he said, 'Yes,' and so we are putting it into my collection—partly for that, and partly, when the coat-of-arms is done, to show that the book belongs to me. Now, Father dear, the explaining is really quite finished this time, and you may do all the rest of the show-off yourself!"

CHAPTER IX

"St. George! a stirring life they lead,
That have such neighbours near."—*Marmion.*

"OH, Jemima! Jemima! I know you are very kind; and I do mean not to be impatient; but either you're telling stories or you're talking nonsense, and that's a fact. How can you say that that blue stuff is a beautiful match, and will wash the exact colour, and that you're sure I shall like it when it's made up with a cord and tassels, when it's *not* the blue I want, and when you *know* the men in hospital haven't any tassels to their dressing-gowns at all! You're as bad as that horrid shopman who made me so angry. If I had not been obliged to be good, I should have liked to hit him hard with my crutch, when he kept on saying he knew I should prefer a shawl-pattern lined with crimson, if I would let him send one. Oh, here comes Father! Now, that's right; he'll know. Father dear, *is* this blue pattern the same colour as that?"

"Certainly not. But what's the matter, my child?"

"It's about my dressing-gown; and I do get so tired about it, because people will talk nonsense, and won't speak the truth, and won't believe I know what I want myself. Now, I'll tell you what I want. Do you know the Hospital Lines?"

"In the Camp? Yes."

"And you've seen all the invalids walking about in blue dressing-gowns and little red ties?"

"Yes. Charming bits of colour."

"Hurrah! that's just it! Now, Father dear, if you wanted a dressing-gown exactly like that—— *would* you have one made of this?"

"Not if I knew it! Crude, coarse, staring—— please don't wave it in front of my eyes, unless you want to make me feel like a bull with a red rag before him!"

"Oh, Father dear, you *are* sensible! (Jemima, throw this pattern away, please!) But you'd have felt far worse if you'd seen the shawl-pattern lined with crimson. Oh, I do wish I could have been a bull that wasn't obliged to be *lætus* for half a minute, to give that shopman just one toss! But I believe the best way to do will be as O'Reilly says—get Uncle Henry to buy me a real one out of store, and have it made smaller for me. And I should like it 'out of store.'"

From this conversation it will be seen that Leonard's military bias knew no change. Had it been less strong it could only have served to intensify the pain of the heartbreaking associations which anything connected with the troops now naturally raised in his parents' minds. But it was a sore subject that fairly healed itself.

The Camp had proved a more cruel neighbour than the Master of the House had ever imagined in his forebodings; but it also proved a friend. For if the high ambitious spirit, the ardent imagination, the vigorous will, which fired the boy's fancy for soldiers and soldier-life, had thus led to his calamity, they found in that sympathy with men of hardihood and lives of discipline, not only an interest that never failed and that lifted the sufferer out of himself, but

a constant incentive to those virtues of courage and patience for which he struggled with touching conscientiousness.

Then, without disparagement to the earnestness of his efforts to be good, it will be well believed that his parents did their best to make goodness easy to him. His vigorous individuality still swayed the plans of the household, and these came to be regulated by those of the Camp to a degree which half annoyed and half amused its Master.

The *Asholt Gazette* was delivered as regularly as the *Times;* but on special occasions, the arrangements for which were only known the night before, O'Reilly, or some other Orderly, might be seen wending his way up the Elm Avenue by breakfast-time, "with Colonel Jones's compliments, and the Orders of the Day for the young gentleman." And so many were the military displays at which Leonard contrived to be present, that the associations of pleasure and alleviation with Parades and Manœuvres came at last almost to blot out the associations of pain connected with that fatal Field Day.

He drove about a great deal, either among air-cushions in the big carriage or in a sort of perambulator of his own, which was all too easily pushed by any one, and by the side of which The Sweep walked slowly and contentedly, stopping when Leonard stopped, wagging his tail when Leonard spoke, and keeping sympathetic step to the invalid's pace with four sinewy black legs, which were young enough and strong enough to have ranged for miles over the heather hills and never felt fatigue. A true Dog Friend!

What the Master of the House pleasantly called "Our Military Mania," seemed to have reached its climax during certain July manœuvres of the regi-

ments stationed at Asholt, and of additional troops who lay out under canvas in the surrounding country.

Into this mimic campaign Leonard threw himself heart and soul. His Camp friends furnished him with early information of the plans for each day, so far as the generals of the respective forces allowed them to get wind, and with an energy that defied his disabilities he drove about after " the armies," and then scrambled on his crutches to points of vantage where the carriage could not go.

And the Master of the House went with him.

The house itself seemed soldier-bewitched. Orderlies were as plentiful as rooks among the elm-trees. The staff clattered in and out, and had luncheon at unusual hours, and strewed the cedar-wood hall with swords and cocked hats, and made low bows over Lady Jane's hand, and rode away among the trees.

These were weeks of pleasure and enthusiasm for Leonard, and of not less delight for The Sweep; but they were followed by an illness.

That Leonard bore his sufferings better helped to conceal the fact that they undoubtedly increased; and he over-fatigued himself and got a chill, and had to go to bed, and took The Sweep to bed with him.

And it was when he could play at no " soldier-game," except that of " being in hospital," that he made up his mind to have a blue dressing-gown of regulation colour and pattern, and met with the difficulties aforesaid in carrying out his whim.

CHAPTER X

" Fills the room up of my absent child,
Lies in his bed, walks up and down with me;
Puts on his pretty looks, repeats his words,
Remembers me of all his gracious parts,
Stuffs out his vacant garments with his form."

King John, Act III.

LONG years after they were written, a bundle of letters lay in the drawer of a cabinet in Lady Jane's morning-room, carefully kept, each in its own envelope, and every envelope stamped with the post-mark of Asholt Camp.

They were in Leonard's handwriting. A childish hand, though good for his age, but round and clear as his own speech.

After much coaxing and considering, and after consulting with the doctors, Leonard had been allowed to visit the Barrack Master and his wife. After his illness he was taken to the seaside, which he liked so little that he was bribed to stay there by the promise that, if the Doctor would allow it, he should, on his return, have the desire of his heart, and be permitted to live for a time "in Camp," and sleep in a hut.

The Doctor gave leave. Small quarters would neither mar nor mend an injured spine; and if he felt the lack of space and luxuries to which he was accustomed, he would then be content to return home.

The Barrack Master's hut only boasted one spare bed-chamber for visitors, and when Leonard and his

dog were in it there was not much elbow-room. A sort of cupboard was appropriated for the use of Jemima, and Lady Jane drove constantly into Camp to see her son. Meanwhile he proved a very good correspondent, as his letters will show for themselves.

LETTER I

"BARRACK MASTER'S HUT,
"*The Camp, Asholt.*

"MY DEAR, DEAR MOTHER,

"I hope you are quite well, and Father also. I am very happy, and so is The Sweep. He tried sleeping on my bed last night, but there was not room, though I gave him as much as ever I could. So he slept on the floor. It is a camp bed, and folds up, if you want it to. We have nothing like it. It belonged to a real General. The General is dead. Uncle Henry bought it at his sale. You always have a sale if you die, and your brother-officers buy your things to pay your debts. Sometimes you get them very cheap. I mean the things.

"The drawers fold up, too. I mean the chest of drawers, and so does the washhand-stand. It goes into the corner, and takes up very little room. There couldn't be a bigger one, or the door would not open —the one that leads into the kitchen. The other door leads into a passage. I like having the kitchen next me. You can hear everything. You can hear O'Reilly come in the morning, and I call to him to open my door, and he says, 'Yes, sir,' and opens it, and lets The Sweep out for a run, and takes my boots. And you can hear the tap of the boiler running with your hot water before she brings it, and you can smell the bacon frying for breakfast.

"Aunt Adelaide was afraid I should not like being

woke up so early, but I do. I waked a good many times. First with the gun. It's like a very short thunder, and shakes you. And then the bugles play. Father would like *them!* And then right away in the distance—trumpets. And the air comes in so fresh at the window. And you pull up the clothes, if they've fallen off you, and go to sleep again. Mine had all fallen off, except the sheet, and The Sweep was lying on them. Wasn't it clever of him to have found them in the dark? If I can't keep them on, I'm going to have campaigning blankets; they are sewed up like a bag, and you get into them.

"What do you think I found on my coverlet when I went to bed? A real, proper, blue dressing-gown, and a crimson tie! It came out of store, and Aunt Adelaide made it smaller herself. Wasn't it kind of her?

"I have got it on now. Presently I am going to dress properly, and O'Reilly is going to wheel me down to the stores. It will be great fun. My cough has been pretty bad, but it's no worse than it was at home.

"There's a soldier come for the letters, and they are obliged to be ready.

"I am, your loving and dutiful son,

"LEONARD.

"P.S.—Uncle Henry says his father was very old-fashioned, and he always liked him to put 'Your dutiful son,' so I put it to you.

"All these crosses mean kisses, Jemima told me."

LETTER II

". . . I WENT to church yesterday, though it was only Tuesday. I need not have gone unless I liked,

but I liked. There is service every evening in the Iron Church, and Aunt Adelaide goes, and so do I, and sometimes Uncle Henry. There are not very many people go, but they behave very well, what there are. You can't tell what the officers belong to in the afternoon, because they are in plain clothes; but Aunt Adelaide thinks they were Royal Engineers, except one Commissariat one, and an A.D.C., and the Colonel of a regiment that marched in last week. You can't tell what the ladies belong to unless you know them.

"You can always tell the men. Some were Barrack Sergeants, and some were Sappers, and there were two Gunners, and an Army Hospital Corps, and a Cavalry Corporal who came all the way from the barracks, and sat near the door, and said very long prayers to himself at the end. And there were some school-masters, and a man with grey hair and no uniform, who mends the roofs and teaches in the Sunday School, and I forget the rest. Most of the choir are Sappers and Commissariat men, and the boys are soldiers' sons. The Sappers and Commissariat belong to our Brigade.

"There is no Sexton to our Church. He's a Church Orderly. He has put me a kind of a back in the corner of one of the Officers' Seats, to make me comfortable in church, and a very high footstool. I mean to go every day, and as often as I can on Sundays, without getting too much tired.

"You can go very often on Sunday mornings if you want to. They begin at eight o'clock, and go on till luncheon. There's a fresh band, and a fresh chaplain, and a fresh sermon, and a fresh congregation every time. Those are Parade Services. The others are Voluntary Services, and I thought that

meant for the Volunteers; but O'Reilly laughed, and said, 'No, it only means that there's no occasion to go to them at all'—he means unless you like. But then I do like. There's no sermon on week days. Uncle Henry is very glad, and so am I. I think it might make my back ache.

"I am afraid, dear Mother, that you won't be able to understand all I write to you from the Camp; but if you don't, you must ask me, and I'll explain.

"When I say *our quarters*, remember I mean our hut; and when I say *rations* it means bread and meat, and I'm not quite sure if it means coals and candles as well. But I think I'll make you a Dictionary if I can get a ruled book from the Canteen. It would make this letter too much to go for a penny if I put all the words in I know. Cousin George tells me them when he comes in after mess. He told me the Camp name for Iron Church is Tin Tabernacle; but Aunt Adelaide says it's not, and I'm not to call it so, so I don't. But that's what he says.

"I like Cousin George very much. I like his uniform. He is very thin, particularly round the waist. Uncle Henry is very stout, particularly round the waist. Last night George came in after mess, and two other officers out of his regiment came too. And then another officer came in. And they chaffed Uncle Henry, and Uncle Henry doesn't mind. And the other officer said, 'Three times round a Subaltern —once round a Barrack Master.' And so they got Uncle Henry's sword-belt out of his dressing-room, and George and his friends stood back to back, and held up their jackets out of the way, and the other officer put the belt right round them, all three, and told them not to laugh. And Aunt Adelaide said, 'Oh!' and 'You'll hurt them.' And he said, 'Not

a bit of it.' And he buckled it. So that shows. It was great fun.

"I am, your loving and dutiful son,

"LEONARD.

"P.S.—The other officer is an Irish officer—at least, I think so, but I can't be quite sure, because he won't speak the truth. I said, 'You talk rather like O'Reilly; are you an Irish soldier?' And he said, 'I'd the misfortune to be quartered for six months in the County Cork, and it was the ruin of my French accent.' So I said, 'Are you a Frenchman?' and they all laughed, so I don't know.

"P.S. No. 2.—My back has been very bad, but Aunt Adelaide says I have been very good. This is not meant for swagger, but to let you know.

"(*Swagger* means boasting. If you're a soldier, swagger is the next worst thing to running away.)

"P.S. No. 3.—I know another officer now. I like him. He is a D.A.Q.M.G. I would let you guess that if you could ever find it out, but you couldn't. It means Deputy-Assistant-Quarter-Master-General. He is not so grand as you would think; a plain General is really grander. Uncle Henry says so, and he knows."

LETTER III

". . . I HAVE seen V. C. I have seen him twice. I have seen his cross. The first time was at the Sports. Aunt Adelaide drove me there in the pony-carriage. We stopped at the Enclosure. The Enclosure is a rope, with a man taking tickets. The Sports are inside; so is the tent, with tea; so are the ladies, in awfully pretty dresses, and the officers walking round them.

" There's great fun outside, at least I should think so. There's a crowd of people, and booths, and a skeleton man. I saw his picture. I should like to have seen him, but Aunt Adelaide didn't want to, so I tried to be *lætus* without.

" When we got to the Enclosure there was a gentleman taking his ticket, and when he turned round he was V. C. Wasn't it funny? So he came back and said, 'Why, here's my little friend!' And he said, 'You must let me carry you.' And so he did, and put me among the ladies. But the ladies got him a good deal. He went and talked to lots of them, but I tried to be *lætus* without him; and then Cousin George came, and lots of others, and then the V. C. came back and showed me things about the Sports.

" Sports are very hard work: they make you so hot and tired; but they are very nice to watch. The races were great fun, particularly when they fell in the water, and the men in sacks who hop, and the blindfolded men with wheelbarrows. Oh, they were so funny! They kept wheeling into each other, all except one, and he went wheeling and wheeling right away up the field, all by himself and all wrong! I did laugh.

" But what I liked best were the tent-pegging men, and most best of all, the Tug-of-War.

" The Irish officer did tent-pegging. He has the dearest pony you ever saw. He is so fond of it, and it is so fond of him. He talks to it in Irish, and it understands him. He cut off the Turk's head,—not a real Turk, a sham Turk, and not a whole one, only the head stuck on a pole.

" The Tug-of-War was splendid! Two sets of men pulling at a rope to see which is strongest. They did pull! They pulled so hard, both of them, with

all their might and main, that we thought it must be a drawn battle. But at last one set pulled the other over, and then there was such a noise that my head ached dreadfully, and the Irish officer carried me into the tent and gave me some tea. And then we went home.

"The next time I saw V. C. was on Sunday at Parade Service. He is on the Staff, and wears a cocked hat. He came in with the General and the A.D.C. who was at church on Tuesday, and I was so glad to see him.

"After church, everybody went about saying 'Good-morning,' and 'How hot it was in Church!' and V. C. helped me with my crutches, and showed me his cross. And the General came up and spoke to me, and I saw his medals, and he asked how you were, and I said, 'Quite well, thank you.' And then he talked to a lady with some little boys dressed like sailors. She said how hot it was in Church, and he said, 'I thought the roof was coming off with that last hymn.' And she said, 'My little boys call it the "Tug-of-War Hymn"; they are very fond of it.' And he said, 'The men seem very fond of it.' And he turned round to an officer I didn't know, and said, 'They ran away from you that last verse but one.' And the officer said, 'Yes, sir, they always do; so I stop the organ and let them have it their own way.'

"I asked Aunt Adelaide, 'Does that officer play the organ?' And she said, 'Yes, and he trains the choir. He's coming in to supper.' So he came. If the officers stay sermon on Sunday evenings, they are late for mess. So the chaplain stops after Prayers, and anybody that likes to go out before sermon can. If they stay sermon, they go to supper with some of the married officers instead of dining at mess.

"So he came. I liked him awfully. He plays

like Father, only I think he can play more difficult things.

"He says 'Tug-of-War Hymn' is a very good name for that hymn, because the men are so fond of it they all sing, and the ones at the bottom of the church 'drag over' the choir and the organ.

"He said, 'I've talked till I'm black in the face, and all to no purpose. It would try the patience of a saint.' So I said, 'Are you a saint?' And he laughed and said, 'No, I'm afraid not; I'm only a kapellmeister.' So I call him 'Kapellmeister.' I do like him.

"I do like the 'Tug-of-War Hymn.' It begins, 'The Son of GOD goes forth to war.' That's the one. But we have it to a tune of our own on Saints' Days. The verse the men tug with is, 'A noble army, men and boys.' I think they like it because it's about the army; and so do I.

"I am, your loving and dutiful son,

"LEONARD.

"P.S.—I call the ones with cocked hats and feathers, 'Cockatoos.' There was another Cockatoo who walked away with the General. Not very big. About the bigness of the stuffed General in that Pawnbroker's window; and I do think he had quite as many medals. I wanted to see them. I wish I had. He looked at me. He had a very gentle face; but I was afraid of it. Was I a coward?

"You remember what these crosses are, don't you? I told you."

LETTER IV

"THIS is a very short letter. It's only to ask you to send my book of Poor Things by the Orderly who

takes this, unless you are quite sure you are coming to see me to-day.

" A lot of officers are collecting for me, and there's one in the Engineers can print very well, so he'll put them in.

" A Colonel with only one arm dined here yesterday. You can't think how well he manages, using first his knife and then his fork, and talking so politely all the time. He has all kinds of dodges, so as not to give trouble and do everything for himself. I mean to put him in.

" I wrote to Cousin Alan, and asked him to collect for me. I like writing letters, and I do like getting them. Uncle Henry says he hates a lot of posts in the day. I hate posts when there's nothing for me. I like all the rest.

" Cousin Alan wrote back by return. He says he can only think of the old chap whose legs were cut off in battle :

> 'And when his legs were smitten off,
> He fought upon his stumps!'

It was very brave, if it's true. Do you think it is? He did not tell me his name.

" Your loving and dutiful son,

" LEONARD.

" P.S.—I am *lætus sorte mea*, and so is The Sweep."

LETTER V

" THIS letter is not about a Poor Thing. It's about a saint—a soldier saint—which I and the Chaplain think nearly the best kind. His name was Martin, he got to be a Bishop in the end, but when he first enlisted he was only a catechumen. Do you

know what a catechumen is, dear Mother? Perhaps if you're not quite so high-church as the Engineer I told you of, who prints so beautifully, you may not know. It means when you've been born a heathen, and are going to be a Christian, only you've not yet been baptized. The Engineer has given me a picture of him, St. Martin, I mean, and now he has printed underneath it, in beautiful thick black letters that you can hardly read if you don't know what they are, and the very particular words in red, 'Martin—yet but a Catechumen!' He can illuminate too, though not quite so well as Father. He is very high-church, and I'm high-church too, and so is our Chaplain, but he is broad as well. The Engineer thinks he's rather too broad, but Uncle Henry and Aunt Adelaide think he's quite perfect, and so do I, and so does everybody else. He comes in sometimes, but not very often because he's so busy. He came the other night because I wanted to confess. What I wanted to confess was that I had laughed in church. He is a very big man, and he has a very big surplice, with a great lot of gathers behind, which makes my Engineer very angry, because it's the wrong shape, and he preaches splendidly, the Chaplain I mean, straight out of his head, and when all the soldiers are listening he swings his arms about, and the surplice gets in his way, and he catches hold of it, and oh! Mother dear, I must tell you what it reminded me of. When I was very little, and Father used to tie a knot in his big pocket-handkerchief and put his first finger into it to make a head that nodded, and wind the rest round his hand, and stick out his thumb and another finger for arms, and do the 'Yea-verily-man' to amuse you and me. It was last Sunday, and a most splendid sermon, but his stole got round under his ear, and his sleeves did look just like the Yea-verily-man, and I tried not to

look, and then I caught the Irish officer's eye and he twinkled, and then I laughed, because I remembered his telling Aunt Adelaide, 'That's the grandest old Padrè that ever got up into a pulpit, but did ye ever see a man get so mixed up with his clothes?' I was very sorry when I laughed, so I settled I would confess, for my Engineer thinks you ought always to confess, so when our Chaplain came in after dinner on Monday, I confessed, but he only laughed, till he broke down Aunt Adelaide's black and gold chair. He is too big for it, really. Aunt Adelaide never lets Uncle Henry sit on it. So he was very sorry, and Aunt Adelaide begged him not to mind, and then in came my Engineer in war-paint (if you look out *war-paint* in the Canteen Book I gave you, you'll see what it means). He was in war-paint because he was Orderly Officer for the evening, and he'd got his sword under one arm, and the picture under the other and his short cloak on to keep it dry, because it was raining. He made the frame himself; he can make Oxford frames quite well, and he's going to teach me how to. Then I said, 'Who is it?' so he told me, and now I'm going to tell you, in case you don't know. Well, St. Martin was born in Hungary, in the year 316. His father and mother were heathens, but when he was about my age he made up his mind he would be a Christian. His father and mother were so afraid of his turning into a monk, that as soon as he was old enough they enlisted him in the army, hoping that would cure him of wanting to be a Christian, but it didn't—Martin wanted to be a Christian just as much as ever; still he got interested with his work and his comrades, and he dawdled on only a Catechumen, and didn't make full profession and get baptized. One winter his corps was quartered at Amiens, and on a very bitter night, near the

gates, he saw a half-naked Beggar shivering with the cold. (I asked my Engineer, 'Was he Orderly Officer for the evening?' but he said, 'More likely on patrol duty, with some of his comrades. However, he says he won't be sure, for Martin was Tribune, which is very nearly a Colonel, two years afterwards, he knows.) When Martin saw the Beggar at the gate, he pulled out his big military cloak, and drew his sword, and cut it in half, and wrapped half of it round the poor Beggar to keep him warm. I know you'll think him very kind, but wait a bit, that's not all. Next night when Martin the soldier was asleep he had a vision. Did you ever have a vision? I wish I could! This was Martin's vision. He saw Christ our Lord in Heaven, sitting among the shining hosts, and wearing over one shoulder half a military cloak, and as Martin saw Him he heard Him say, 'Behold the mantle given to Me by Martin—yet but a Catechumen!' After that vision he didn't wait any longer; he was baptized at once.

"Mother dear, I've told you this quite truthfully, but I can't tell it you so *splendidly* as my Engineer did, standing with his back to the fire and holding out his cape, and drawing his sword to show me how Martin divided his cloak with the Beggar. Aunt Adelaide isn't afraid of swords, she is too used to them, but she says she thinks soldiers do things in huts they would never think of doing in big rooms, just to show how neatly they can manage, without hurting anything. The Chaplain broke the chair, but then he isn't exactly a soldier, and the D.A.Q.M.G. that I told you of, comes in sometimes and says, 'I beg your pardon, Mrs. Jones, but I must,'—and puts both his hands on the end of the sofa, and lifts his body till he gets his legs sticking straight out. They are very long legs, and he and the sofa go nearly

across the room, but he never kicks anything, it's a kind of athletics; and there's another officer who comes in at one door and Catherine-wheel's right across to the farthest door, and he is over six foot, too, but they never break anything. We do laugh.

"I wish you could have seen my Engineer doing St. Martin. He had to go directly afterwards, and then the Chaplain came and stood in front of me, on the hearthrug, in the firelight, just where my Engineer had been standing, and he took up the picture, and looked at it. So I said, 'Do you know about St. Martin?' and he said he did, and he said, 'One of the greatest of those many Soldiers of the Cross who have also fought under earthly banners.' Then he put down the picture, and got hold of his elbow with his hand, as if he was holding his surplice out of the way, and said, 'Great, as well as good, for this reason: he was one of those rare souls to whom the counsels of GOD are clear, not to the utmost of the times in which he lived—but in advance of those times. Such men are not always popular, nor even largely successful in their day, but the light they hold lightens more generations of this naughty world than the pious tapers of commoner men. You know that Martin the Catechumen became Martin the Saint—do you know that Martin the Soldier became Martin the Bishop?—and that in an age of credulity and fanaticism, that man of GOD discredited some relics very popular with the pious in his diocese, and proved and exposed them to be those of an executed robber. Later in life it is recorded of Martin, Bishop of Tours, that he lifted his voice in protest against persecutions for religion, and the punishment of heretics. In the nineteenth century we are little able to judge, how great must have been the faith of that man in the GOD of truth and of love.' It was like a little sermon

and I think this is exactly how he said it, for I got Aunt Adelaide to write it out for me this morning, and she remembers sermons awfully well. I've been looking St. Martin out in the calendar; his day is the 11th of November. He is not a Collect, Epistle, and Gospel Saint, only one of the Black Letter ones; but the 11th of November is going to be on a Sunday this year, and I am so glad, for I've asked our Chaplain if we may have the 'Tug-of-War Hymn' for St. Martin—and he has given leave.

"It's a long way off; I wish it came sooner. So now, Mother dear, you have time to make your arrangements as you like, but you see that whatever happens, *I* must be in Camp on St. Martin's Day.

"Your loving and dutiful son,

"LEONARD."

CHAPTER XI

"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth—— !"—2 *Tim.* iv. 7.

It was Sunday. Sunday, the eleventh of November—St. Martin's Day.

Though it was in November, a summer day. A day of that Little Summer which alternately claims St. Luke and St. Martin as its patrons, and is apt to shine its brightest when it can claim both—on the feast of All Saints.

Sunday in Camp. With curious points of likeness and unlikeness to English Sundays elsewhere. Like in that general aspect of tidiness and quiet, of gravity and pause, which betrays that a hard-working and very practical people have thought good to keep much of the Sabbath with its Sunday. Like, too, in the little groups of children, gay in Sunday best, and grave with Sunday books, trotting to Sunday School.

Unlike, in that to see all the men about the place washed and shaved is not, among soldiers, peculiar to Sunday. Unlike, also, in a more festal feeling produced by the gay gatherings of men and officers on Church Parade (far distant be the day when Parade Services shall be abolished !), and by the exhilarating sounds of the bands with which each regiment marched from its parade-ground to the church.

Here and there small detachments might be met making their way to the Roman Catholic Church in camp, or to places of worship of various denominations in the neighbouring town; and on Blind Baby's

Parade (where he was prematurely crushing his Sunday frock with his drum-basket in ecstatic sympathy with the bands), a corporal of exceptional views was parading himself and two privates of the same denomination, before marching the three of them to their own peculiar prayer-meeting.

The Brigade for the Iron Church paraded early (the sunshine and sweet air seemed to promote alacrity). And after the men were seated their officers still lingered outside, chatting with the ladies and the Staff, as these assembled by degrees, and sunning themselves in the genial warmth of St. Martin's Little Summer.

The V. C. was talking with the little boys in sailor suits and their mother, when the officer who played the organ came towards them.

"Good-morning, Kapellmeister!" said two or three voices.

Nicknames were common in the camp, and this one had been rapidly adopted.

"Ye look cloudy this fine morning, Kapellmeister!" cried the Irish officer. "Got the toothache?"

The Kapellmeister shook his head, and forced a smile which rather intensified than diminished the gloom of a countenance which did not naturally lend itself to lines of levity. Was he not a Scotchman and also a musician? His lips smiled in answer to the chaff, but his sombre eyes were fixed on the V. C. They had—as some eyes have—an odd, summoning power, and the V. C. went to meet him.

When he said, "I was in there this morning," the V. C.'s eyes followed the Kapellmeister's to the Barrack Master's hut, and his own face fell.

"He wants the 'Tug-of-War Hymn,'" said the Kapellmeister.

"He's not coming to church?"

"Oh, no; but he's set his heart on hearing the 'Tug-of-War Hymn' through his bedroom window; and it seems the Chaplain has promised we shall have it to-day. It's a most amazing thing," added the Kapellmeister, shooting out one arm with a gesture common to him when oppressed by an idea,—"it's a *most* amazing thing! For I think, if I were in my grave, that hymn—as these men bolt with it—might make me turn in my place of rest; but it's the last thing I should care to hear if I were ill in bed! However, he wants it, poor lad, and he asked me to ask you if you would turn outside when it begins, and sing so that he can hear your voice and the words."

"Oh, he can never hear me over there!"

"He can hear you fast enough! It's quite close. He begged me to ask you, and I was to say it's his last Sunday."

There was a pause. The V. C. looked at the little "Officers' Door," which was close to his usual seat, which always stood open in summer weather, and half in and half out of which men often stood in the crush of a Parade Service. There was no difficulty in the matter except his own intense dislike to anything approaching to display. Also he had become more attached than he could have believed possible to the gallant-hearted child whose worship of him had been flattery as delicate as it was sincere. It was no small pain to know that the boy lay dying—a pain he would have preferred to bear in silence.

"Is he very much set upon it?"

"Absolutely."

"Is she——is Lady Jane there?"

"All of them. He can't last the day out."

"When will it be sung—that hymn, I mean?"

"I've put it on after the third Collect."

"All right."

The V. C. took up his sword and went to his seat, and the Kapellmeister took up his and went to the organ.

* * * * *

In the Barrack Master's hut my hero lay dying. His mind was now absolutely clear, but during the night it had wandered—wandered in a delirium that was perhaps some solace of his sufferings, for he had believed himself to be a soldier on active service, bearing the brunt of battle and the pain of wounds; and when fever consumed him, he thought it was the heat of India that parched his throat and scorched his skin, and called again and again in noble raving to imaginary comrades to keep up heart and press forward.

About four o'clock he sank into stupor, and the Doctor forced Lady Jane to go and lie down, and the Colonel took his wife away to rest also.

At gun-fire Leonard opened his eyes. For some minutes he gazed straight ahead of him, and the Master of the House, who sat by his bedside, could not be sure whether he were still delirious or no; but when their eyes met he saw that Leonard's senses had returned to him, and kissed the wan little hand that was feeling about for The Sweep's head in silence that he almost feared to break.

Leonard broke in by saying, "When did you bring Uncle Rupert to Camp, Father dear?"

"Uncle Rupert is at home, my darling; and you are in Uncle Henry's hut."

"I know I am; and so is Uncle Rupert. He is at the end of the room there. Can't you see him?"

"No, Len; I only see the wall, with your text on it that poor old Father did for you."

"My 'Goodly heritage,' you mean? I can't see that now. Uncle Rupert is in front of it. I thought

you put him there. Only he's out of his frame, and——it's very odd ! "

" What's odd, my darling ? "

" Some one has wiped away all the tears from his eyes."

* * * * *

" Hymn two hundred and sixty-three : ' Fight the good fight of faith.' "

The third Collect was just ended, and a prolonged and somewhat irregular Amen was dying away among the choir, who were beginning to feel for their hymn-books.

The lack of precision, the " dropping shots " style in which that Amen was delivered, would have been more exasperating to the Kapellmeister, if his own attention had not been for the moment diverted by anxiety to know if the V. C. remembered that the time had come.

As the Chaplain gave out the hymn, the Kapellmeister gave one glance of an eye, as searching as it was sombre, round the corner of that odd little curtain which it is the custom to hang behind an organist ; and this sufficing to tell him that the V. C. had not forgotten, he drew out certain very vocal stops, and bending himself to manual and pedal, gave forth the popular melody of the " Tug-of-War Hymn " with a precision indicative of a resolution to have it sung in strict time, or know the reason why.

And as nine hundred and odd men rose to their feet with some clatter of heavy boots and accoutrements the V. C. turned quietly out of the crowded church, and stood outside upon the steps, bare-headed in the sunshine of St. Martin's Little Summer, and with the tiniest of hymn-books between his fingers and thumb.

Circumstances had made a soldier of the V. C., but by nature he was a student. When he brought the little hymn-book to his eyes to get a mental grasp of the hymn before he began to sing it, he committed the first four lines to an intelligence sufficiently trained to hold them in remembrance for the brief time that it would take to sing them. Involuntarily his active brain did more, and was crossed by a critical sense of the crude, barbaric taste of childhood, and a wonder what consolation the suffering boy could find in these gaudy lines—

> " The Son of GOD goes forth to war,
> A kingly crown to gain;
> His blood-red banner streams afar:
> Who follows in His train? "

But when he brought the little hymn-book to his eyes to take in the next four lines, they startled him with the revulsion of a sudden sympathy; and lifting his face towards the Barrack Master's hut, he sang—as he rarely sang in drawing-rooms, even words the most felicitous to melodies the most sweet—sang not only to the delight of dying ears, but so that the Kapellmeister himself heard him, and smiled as he heard—

> " Who best can drink His cup of woe
> Triumphant over pain,
> Who patient bears His cross below,
> He follows in His train."

* * * * *

On each side of Leonard's bed, like guardian angels, knelt his father and mother. At his feet lay The Sweep, who now and then lifted a long, melancholy nose and anxious eyes.

At the foot of the bed stood the Barrack Master. He had taken up this position at the request of the Master of the House, who had avoided any further

allusion to Leonard's fancy that their Naseby Ancestor had come to Asholt Camp, but had begged his big brother-in-law to stand there and blot out Uncle Rupert's Ghost with his substantial body.

But whether Leonard perceived the *ruse*, forgot Uncle Rupert, or saw him all the same, by no word or sign did he ever betray.

Near the window sat Aunt Adelaide, with her Prayer-book, following the service in her own orderly and pious fashion, sometimes saying a prayer aloud at Leonard's bidding, and anon replying to his oft-repeated inquiry : " Is it the third Collect yet, Aunty dear? "

She had turned her head, more quickly than usual, to speak, when, clear and strenuous on vocal stops, came the melody of the " Tug-of-War Hymn."

" There ! There it is ! Oh, good Kapellmeister ! Mother dear, please go to the window and see if V.C. is there, and wave your hand to him. Father dear, lift me up a little, please. Ah, now I hear him ! Good V. C. ! I don't believe you'll sing better than that when you're promoted to be an angel. Are the men singing pretty loud? May I have a little of that stuff to keep me from coughing, Mother dear? You know I am not impatient; but I do hope, please GOD, I shan't die till I've just heard them *tug* that verse once more ! "

* * * * *

The sight of Lady Jane had distracted the V. C.'s thoughts from the hymn. He was singing mechanically, when he became conscious of some increasing pressure and irregularity in the time. Then he remembered what it was. The soldiers were beginning to tug.

In a moment more the organ stopped, and the V. C. found himself, with over nine hundred men at

his back, singing without accompaniment, and in unison—

> " A noble army—men and boys,
> The matron and the maid,
> Around their Saviour's throne rejoice,
> In robes of white arrayed."

The Kapellmeister conceded that verse to the shouts of the congregation; but he invariably reclaimed control over the last.

Even now, as the men paused to take breath after their " tug," the organ spoke again, softly, but seraphically, and clearer and sweeter above the voices behind him rose the voice of the V. C., singing to his little friend—

> " They climbed the steep ascent of Heaven,
> Through peril, toil, and pain "——

The men sang on; but the V. C. stopped, as if he had been shot. For a man's hand had come to the Barrack Master's window and pulled the white blind down.

CHAPTER XII

"He that hath found some fledged-bird's nest may know
At first sight, if the bird be flown;
But what fair dell or grove he sings in now,
That is to him unknown."—HENRY VAUGHAN.

TRUE to its character as an emblem of human life, the Camp stands on, with all its little manners and customs, whilst the men who garrison it pass rapidly away.

Strange as the vicissitudes of a whole generation elsewhere, are the changes and chances that a few years bring to those who were stationed there together.

To what unforeseen celebrity (or to a dropping out of one's life and even hearsay that once seemed quite as little likely) do one's old neighbours sometimes come! They seem to pass in a few drill seasons as other men pass by lifetimes. Some to foolishness and forgetfulness, and some to fame. This old acquaintance to unexpected glory; that dear friend—alas!—to the grave. And some—GOD speed them!—to the world's end and back, following the drum till it leads them Home again, with familiar faces little changed—with boys and girls, perchance, very greatly changed—and with hearts not changed at all. Can the last parting do much to hurt such friendships between good souls, who have so long learnt to say farewell; to love in absence, to trust through silence, and to have faith in reunion?

The Barrack Master's appointment was an un-

usually permanent one; and he and his wife lived on in Asholt Camp, and saw regiments come and go, as O'Reilly had prophesied, and threw out additional rooms and bow-windows, and took in more garden, and kept a cow on a bit of Government grass beyond the stores, and—with the man who did the roofs, the Church Orderly, and one or two other public characters—came to be reckoned amongst the oldest inhabitants.

George went away pretty soon with his regiment. He was a good, straightforward young fellow, with a dogged devotion to duty, and a certain provincialism of intellect, and general John Bullishness, which he inherited from his father, who had inherited it from his country forefathers. He inherited equally a certain romantic, instinctive, and immovable high-mindedness, not invariably characteristic of much more brilliant men.

He had been very fond of his little cousin, and Leonard's death was a natural grief to him. The funeral tried his fortitude, and his detestation of "scenes," to the very uttermost.

Like most young men who had the honour to know her, George's devotion to his beautiful and gracious aunt, Lady Jane, had had in it something of the nature of worship; but now he was almost glad he was going away, and not likely to see her face for a long time, because it made him feel miserable to see her, and he objected to feeling miserable both on principle and in practice. His peace of mind was assailed, however, from a wholly unexpected quarter, and one which pursued him even more abroad than at home.

The Barrack Master's son had been shocked by his cousin's death; but the shock was really and truly greater when he discovered, by chance gossip,

and certain society indications, that the calamity which left Lady Jane childless had made him his uncle's presumptive heir. The almost physical disgust which the discovery that he had thus acquired some little social prestige produced in this subaltern of a marching regiment must be hard to comprehend by persons of more imagination and less sturdy independence, or by scholars in the science of success. But man differs widely from man, and it is true.

He had been nearly two years in Canada when " the English mail " caused him to fling his fur cap into the air with such demonstrations of delight as greatly aroused the curiosity of his comrades, and, as he bolted to his quarters without further explanation than " Good news from home ! " a rumour was for some time current that " Jones had come into his fortune."

Safe in his own quarters, he once more applied himself to his mother's letter, and picked up the thread of a passage which ran thus—

" Your dear father gets very impatient, and I long to be back in my hut again and see after my flowers, which I can trust to no one since O'Reilly took his discharge. The little conservatory is like a new toy to me, but it is very tiny, and your dear father is worse than no use in it, as he says himself. However, I can't leave Lady Jane till she is quite strong. The baby is a noble little fellow and really beautiful—which I know you won't believe, but that's because you know nothing about babies : not as beautiful as Leonard, of course—that could never be—but a fine, healthy, handsome boy, with eyes that do remind one of his darling brother. I know, dear George, how greatly you always did admire and appreciate your Aunt. Not one bit too much, my son. She is

the noblest woman I have ever known. We have had a very happy time together, and I pray it may please GOD to spare this child to be the comfort to her that you are and have been to

" Your loving
" MOTHER."

This was the good news from home that had sent the young subaltern's fur cap into the air, and that now sent him to his desk; the last place where, as a rule, he enjoyed himself. Poor scribe as he was, however, he wrote two letters then and there: one to his mother, and one of impetuous congratulations to his uncle, full of messages to Lady Jane.

The Master of the House read the letter more than once. It pleased him.

In his own way he was quite as unworldly as his nephew, but it was chiefly from a philosophic contempt for many things that worldly folk struggle for, and a connoisseurship in sources of pleasure not purchasable except by the mentally endowed, and not even valuable to George, as he knew. And he was a man of the world, and a somewhat cynical student of character.

After the third reading he took it, smiling, to Lady Jane's morning-room, where she was sitting, looking rather pale, with her fine hair " coming down " over a tea-gown of strange tints of her husband's choosing, and with the new baby lying in her lap.

He shut the door noiselessly, took a footstool to her feet, and kissed her hand.

" You look like a Romney, Jane,—an unfinished Romney, for you are too white. If you've got a headache, you shan't hear this letter, which I know you'd like to hear."

"I see that I should. Canada postmarks. It's George."

"Yes; it's George. He's uproariously delighted at the advent of this little chap."

"Oh, I knew he'd be that. Let me hear what he says."

The Master of the House read the letter. Lady Jane's eyes filled with tears at the tender references to Leonard, but she smiled through them.

"He's a dear good fellow."

"He *is* a dear, good fellow. It's a most *borné* intellect, but excellence itself. And I'm bound to say," added the Master of the House, driving his hands through the jungle of his hair, "that there is a certain excellence about a soldier when he is a good fellow that seems to be a thing *per se*."

After meditating on this matter for some moments, he sprang up and vigorously rang the bell.

"Jane, you're terribly white; you can bear nothing. Nurse is to take that brat at once, and I'm going to carry you into the garden."

Always much given to the collection and care of precious things, and apt also to change his fads and to pursue each with partiality for the moment, the Master of the House had, for some time past, been devoting all his thoughts and his theories to the preservation of a possession not less valuable than the paragon of Chippendale chairs, and much more destructible—he was taking care of his good wife.

Many family treasures are lost for lack of a little timely care and cherishing, and there are living "examples" as rare as most bric-à-brac, and quite as perishable. Lady Jane was one of them, and after Leonard's death, with no motive for keeping up, she sank into a condition of weakness so profound that it became evident that, unless her failing forces were

fostered, she would not long be parted from her son.

Her husband had taken up his poem again, to divert his mind from his own grief; but he left it behind, and took Lady Jane abroad.

Once roused, he brought to the task of coaxing her back to life an intelligence that generally insured the success of his aims, and he succeeded now. Lady Jane got well; out of sheer gratitude, she said.

Leonard's military friends do not forget him. They are accustomed to remember the absent.

With the death of his little friend the V. C. quits these pages. He will be found in the pages of history.

The Kapellmeister is a fine organist, and a few musical members of the congregation, of all ranks, have a knack of lingering after Evensong at the Iron Church to hear him "play away the people." But on the Sunday after Leonard's death the congregation rose and remained *en masse* as the "Dead March" from *Saul* spoke in solemn and familiar tones the requiem of a hero's soul.

Blind Baby's father was a Presbyterian and disapproved of organs, but he was a fond parent, and his blind child had heard tell that the officer who played the organ so grandly was to play the "Dead March" on the Sabbath evening for the little gentleman that died on the Sabbath previous, and he was wild to go and hear it. Then the service would be past, and the Kapellmeister was a fellow-Scot, and the house of mourning has a powerful attraction for that serious race, and for one reason or another Corporal Macdonald yielded to the point saying, "Aweel, if you're a gude bairn, I'll tak ye to the kirk door, and ye may lay your lug at the chink, and hear what ye can."

But when they got there the door was open, and

Blind Baby pushed his way through the crowd, as if the organ had drawn him with a rope, straight to the Kapellmeister's side.

It was the beginning of a friendship much to Blind Baby's advantage, which did not end when the child had been sent to a Blind School, and then to a college where he learnt to be a tuner, and "earned his own living."

Poor Jemima fretted so bitterly for the loss of the child she had nursed with such devotion, that there was possibly some truth in O'Reilly's rather complicated assertion that he married her because he could not bear to see her cry.

He took his discharge, and was installed by the Master of the House as lodge-keeper at the gates through which he had so often passed as "a tidy one."

Freed from military restraints, he became a very untidy one indeed, and grew hair in such reckless abundance that he came to look like an orang-outang with an unusually restrained figure and exceptionally upright carriage.

He was the best of husbands every day in the year but the seventeenth of March; and Jemima enjoyed herself very much as she boasted to the wives of less handy civilians that "her man was as good as a woman about the house, any day." (Any day, that is, except the seventeenth of March.)

With window-plants cunningly and ornamentally enclosed by a miniature paling and gate, as if the window-sill were a hut garden; with coloured tissue-paper fly-catchers made on the principle of barrack-room Christmas decorations; with shelves, brackets, Oxford frames, and other efforts of the decorative joinery of O'Reilly's evenings; with a large, hard sofa, chairs, elbow-chairs, and antimacassars; and with a

round table in the middle—the Lodge parlour is not a room to live in, but it is almost bewildering to peep into, and curiously like the shrine of some departed saint, so highly framed are the photographs of Leonard's lovely face, and so numerous are his relics.

The fate of Leonard's dog may not readily be guessed.

The gentle reader would not deem it unnatural were I to chronicle that he died of a broken heart. Failing this excess of sensibility, it seems obvious that he should have attached himself immovably to Lady Jane, and have lived at ease and died full of dignity in his little master's ancestral halls. He did go back there for a short time, but the day after the funeral he disappeared. When word came to the household that he was missing and had not been seen since he was let out in the morning, the butler put on his hat and hurried off with a beating heart to Leonard's grave.

But The Sweep was not there, dead or alive. He was at that moment going at a sling trot along the dusty road that led into the Camp. Timid persons, imperfectly acquainted with dogs, avoided him; he went so very straight, it looked like hydrophobia; men who knew better, and saw that he was only "on urgent private affairs," chaffed him as they passed, and some with little canes and horseplay waylaid and tried to intercept him. But he was a big dog, and made himself respected, and pursued his way.

His way was to the Barrack Master's hut.

The first room he went into was that in which Leonard died. He did not stay there three minutes. Then he went to Leonard's own room, the little one next to the kitchen, and this he examined exhaustively, crawling under the bed, snuffing at both doors, and lifting his long nose against hope to investigate

impossible places, such as the top of the military chest of drawers. Then he got on to the late General's camp bed and went to sleep.

He was awakened by the smell of the bacon frying for breakfast, and he had breakfast with the family. After this he went out, and was seen by different persons at various places in the Camp, the General Parade, the Stores, and the Iron Church, still searching.

He was invited to dinner in at least twenty different barrack-rooms, but he rejected all overtures till he met O'Reilly, when he turned round and went back to dine with him and his comrades.

He searched Leonard's room once more, and not finding him, he refused to make his home with the Barrack Master; possibly because he could not make up his mind to have a home at all till he could have one with Leonard.

Half-a-dozen of Leonard's officer friends would willingly have adopted him, but he would not own another master. Then military dogs are apt to attach themselves exclusively either to commissioned or to non-commissioned soldiers, and The Sweep cast in his lot with the men, and slept on old coats in corners of barrack-rooms, and bided his time. Dog's masters do get called away suddenly and *come back again.* The Sweep had his hopes, and did not commit himself.

Even if, at length, he realized that Leonard had passed beyond this life's outposts, it roused in him no instincts to return to the Hall. With a somewhat sublime contempt for those shreds of poor mortality laid to rest in the family vault, he elected to live where his little master had been happiest—in Asholt Camp.

Now and then he became excited. It was when

a fresh regiment marched in. On these occasions he invariably made so exhaustive an examination of the regiment and its baggage, as led to his being more or less forcibly adopted by half-a-dozen good-natured soldiers who had had to leave their previous pets behind them. But when he found that Leonard had not returned with that detachment, he shook off everybody and went back to O'Reilly.

When O'Reilly married, he took The Sweep to the Lodge, who thereupon instituted a search about the house and grounds; but it was evident that he had not expected any good results, and when he did not find Leonard he went away quickly down the old Elm Avenue. As he passed along the dusty road that led to Camp for the last time, he looked back now and again with sad eyes to see if O'Reilly was not coming too. Then he returned to the barrack-room, where he was greeted with uproarious welcome, and eventually presented with a new collar by subscription. And so, rising with gun-fire and resting with " lights out," he lived and died a Soldier's Dog.

* * * * *

The new heir thrives at the Hall. He has brothers and sisters to complete the natural happiness of his home, he has good health, good parents, and is having a good education. He will have a goodly heritage. He is developing nearly as vigorous a fancy for soldiers as Leonard had, and drills his brothers and sisters with the help of O'Reilly. If he wishes to make arms his profession he will not be thwarted, for the Master of the House has decided that it is in many respects a desirable and wholesome career for an eldest son. Lady Jane may yet have to buckle on a hero's sword. Brought up by such a mother in the fear of GOD, he ought to be good, he may live to be great, it's odds if he cannot be happy.

But never, not in the "one crowded hour of glorious" victory, not in years of the softest comforts of a peaceful home, by no virtues and in no success shall he bear more fitly than his crippled brother bore the ancient motto of their house—

"Lætus Sorte Mea."

THE END

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19 MAR 1974 ab

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1 JUL 1982